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EDITOR'S WORD

Like the entire church, the Society of Missionaries of Africa has taken the call for “integrity in ministry” very seriously. Confreres from all the provinces have been trained to transmit in turn the practical measures to be adopted to make our communities and places of apostolate safe and secure.

In this issue, some of our confreres who have been responsible for communicating and monitoring the progress of the confreres’ handling of this reality are being given the opportunity to share their experiences.

Let us also point out that integrity in ministry is not only about the sexual aspect, but about all aspects of our apostolate and community life that require and demand a certain transparency and the practice of righteousness.

Far from being the “specialty “ of a certain category of “trained “ confreres, integrity in ministry is the concern of each one of us and understanding its implications is a wise choice.

Freddy Kyombo

Cover :

During a training on integrity in the ministry

PHOTO LOWRENT KAMWAZA

Yaka Proverb (DRC) : *“Habit lulls Caution”*

Meaning : Being attentive to our actions and practices despite the experience we have accumulated over the years.

Like a 500 Piece Puzzle

During my last leave in my native Beauce, Quebec in August 2019, I discovered a taste for a new hobby, doing jigsaw puzzles. This hobby, was inexpensive and to my great surprise it allowed me to clear my mind or rather to think of only one thing, how to assemble the pieces according to the picture on the puzzle's box. At the same time, it also satisfied my taste for solving an enigma.

This simple exercise allows me to relax, as long as the jigsaw puzzle has no more than 500 pieces! Taking 15 minutes, sometimes 30, to find and correctly place 5 or 6 pieces gives me a moment of relaxation. Sometimes, as I try to put it all together, I am convinced that one or two pieces are missing. But towards the end, I realized that no, they were indeed there, camouflaged from my eyes. My attention, which to my surprise, became sharper and finally allowed me to complete this image, initially fragmented into 500 pieces, into a harmonious whole.

This game reminds me that our lives are also made up of several pieces, entities, realities or needs that each require special attention. In fact, I feel within me so many needs, the need to eat well, to drink, to have fun, to work, to pray, to rest, to be useful for someone or a cause,

to play sports, to be alone with myself, to have friends, to talk, to listen, to be listened to etc. If I were to let myself go, I could list 500 of them! In fact, taking the time to revisit my day, as Ignatian spirituality invites us to do, is an opportunity to see those needs that have surfaced during the day or at night and to grasp how I was able to pay attention to them or not.

Martin Grenier
Assistant General





FOREWORD

In his book entitled “The Holy Longing - The Search for a Christian Spirituality” Ronald Rolheiser tells us that all these inner needs are the manifestation of two principles, one being the principle of energy, passion, eros, which like fire gives us vitality, and the second, that of integration, of individuation, a principle which, like cold water, makes it possible for us the possibility to contain ourselves, to harmonise and not to disassemble into 500 pieces!

So our life is like this puzzle, but even more complex because we are by no means a static image. On the contrary, we are living beings who like to move, to relate to each other. In these relationships, there is a desire to share what is dear to us. In our case, as Missionaries of Africa, we have the desire to share our faith in Jesus Christ. As the definition of the positive theme of the last Chapter says so well: “We are sent to the African world and to the places where our charism is called upon, for a prophetic mission of encounter and witness to the love of God. It is therefore important that our witness be an authentic one, one that truly communicates God’s love for all.

However, as we well know, our Church, God’s family on earth, has been the target of much criticism in recent decades. It is a fact that many young and vulnerable people have been abused by members of the Church, by members of our Society. Such news hurts us. An evil that we must take the time to internalise so that it may help us, as the prayer of the Delegate for Protection says so well, “to listen to pains that we cannot imagine, to see scars that time has not healed and to speak with confidence for those who have no voice.

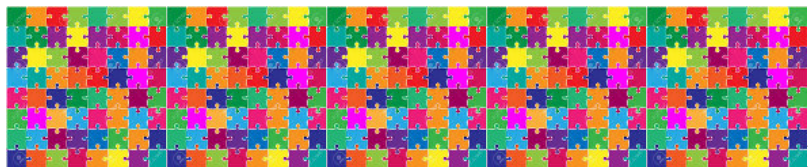
This means that the fact of being baptized, of being confirmed, of having made a missionary commitment in the Society by a solemn promise under oath (see CL 52) is not a guarantee in itself. The possibility of going astray in an awful way is very real. As article 51 of our Constitutions and Laws says so well: “Fidelity to one’s vocation is never acquired once and for all. It must be deepened as the days go by so that it can be an authentic sign of the gift that the missionary makes of himself. “Yes, like everywhere else in the world and in the Church, we have the duty to watch over the quality of our witnesses and the integrity of our actions.



Integrity! This is a big word. In this edition of the *Petit Écho*, several articles reveal different facets of this necessity in the life of our ministry. How can we ensure that this integrity is maintained? A regular evaluation of one's life is a must. But this has also to be done at the level of our Society. This is why, over the next few months, an audit within our various institutes will be set in motion. It will then be a question of seeing to what extent we have been able to set up safe places for young people, and the procedures that allow us to intervene promptly in case of disturbing situations in our Provinces and to see what is being done from the perspective of formation and education in terms of our communities, parishes, places of mission, houses of formation and for any program directly related to vulnerable youth or adults. This will be in view of keeping a sharp focus and updating our policy on the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

In short, may the Lord, who never ceases to call us, give us the strength to continue to be attentive to Him and to keep our eyes and ears alert so that we can be always more committed to the service of young people and those in vulnerable situations. Thus, by constantly putting the 500 pieces of each of our various personalities into a harmonious whole, we will be able to continue to move forward with the spirit of seeking to “establish the Kingdom of Christ among the men and women of the African world” (CL 51).

Martin Grenier
Assistant General





Integrity and Mission, a Topical Issue



In the early 1960's, our Society stopped issuing what was known as the Directory. The documents therein foresaw the different aspects of missionary life. There were very clear guidelines on how to relate to others: men, women and children, laity and religious. There were indications as to where to receive visitors that the missionaries welcomed: in the offices, but never in the rooms, etc. From the beginning of its foundation, the Society was aware of the limits of human nature and the risks that these limits could pose to the work of the mission. However, the winds of freedom of the sixties and seventies “blew” these documents away. Individual conscience became the sole guide for discerning the morality and integrity of the missionary's action.

This lack of understanding of human nature by a Church that nevertheless proclaimed herself through the voice of Paul VI as an “expert in humanity,” led to many evils. Even if they were not new, these evils were dramatic for many. The risk, in suppressing any form of discipline or legislation, is that the individual finds himself before the dictate of his ego and of his search for power. If the individual has not internalized a framework that restrains his all-powerfulness, then the abuses is a



genuine risk. The provision of an external inhibiting framework, which is a reminder of the fundamental law of respect for the integrity of one's neighbor, is then indispensable. Otherwise, the risk becomes so high that the focus will no longer be on the proclamation of the Good News of the Risen Christ, but on the proclamation of the superiority of the missionary over the rest of the faithful.

Fortunately, the vast majority of missionaries are men of faith and morals, entirely given to the mission of Christ, with their limitations of course, but with a generosity and a love for their neighbor. However, some joined our Society without much integrity, and have succeeded in taking advantage of their neighbors. These are the mercenaries for whom "the sheep do not really count" of whom Christ speaks (John 10:13), they are not missionaries.

It had therefore become important to have clear guidelines in our Society to protect those we serve. For this reason, in 2008 our Society provided guidelines for working with the most vulnerable in our ministry. These instruments were revised on a regular basis until we published our current Policy (2015) on the Prevention of Abuse as well as different tools from the Vademecum of Government for the Provinces and the Vademecum for Initial Formation. At the provincial and sector levels, various more contextualized instruments were developed.

Some, often the confreres who have difficulty with their search for power and self-affirmation, have interpreted these guidelines as limiting their freedom. However, these policies are not there to limit freedom, but to protect the weakest.

Certain toxic comments then began to circulate, for example: claiming that one could no longer touch children, not even to bless them; saying that a witch hunt was being conducted; that the Coordinator of Integrity of Ministry (CIM) was the new inquisitor; that the Canon Law and our Oath would be sufficient, etc. Such comments were all fantasies that reflect the difficulty of integrating new parameters of missionary work and the difficulty for some to compromise their search for power. It also reflects another difficulty; that of integrating obedience together with chastity.



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Let us be very clear here, it has never been forbidden to “chastely touch” children in order to bless them. In Africa, it is common at the end of Mass, to see the little ones come to the priest to receive blessings, it is a beautiful evangelical experience, and there is no question of forbidding it. It is not what happens in public that is the problem; it is what happens behind closed doors, far from the inhibiting gaze of others that needs to be controlled. It is important to respond to the invitation of the Universal Church and the successors of the Apostle Peter, of giving justice to those who have suffered from the behavior of some of our confreres and have had to live for decades, sometimes their whole life with dramatic consequences, while the confrere who committed such abuse continues to enjoy all the benefits of our small Society.

CIM is not an inquisitor. The only persons who can exercise the power of governance in our Society regarding this kind of matter are the Superior General and the Provincials. They are the only ones authorized to undertake any canonical procedures that may be required. The CIM acts simply as a counselor and can at times evoke the framework of the law.

Finally, neither Canon Law nor our Oath are sufficient instruments to ensure effective prevention and maximum protection of the most vulnerable. It is for this reason that the Vatican, and in particular the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, decided to come out with a policy to make the Church safer. All the dioceses of the world, religious congregations and institutes of consecrated life have also been invited to do so. We should rejoice that since 2008 we have such instruments in our Society. The Oath does not speak of protecting the most vulnerable, perhaps it should. This is a legitimate concern. In the past, the Oath did not include the formula of commitment to celibacy but it was later added. Why not introduce a formula in which we would commit ourselves to respect the physical, moral and spiritual integrity of the peoples we serve?

Our founder was very much aware of the risks of missionary apostolate without a specified structure. I did mention this in a previous issue of the PE. Our archivist at the Generalate recently shared with me another interesting text from our Venerable Founder. While he was

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stranded in Carthage because of a cholera epidemic (past circumstances which seem more familiar to us today), he wrote in 1885 to missionaries who were doing their annual retreat. In-between various encouragements in the face of external criticism, he pointed out a worrying situation of internal deviation which existed already at the time:

“So it is to you, my dear Children that I am speaking today. The wickedness and boldness of your enemies are beyond your control and you must be resigned to suffer them. But what depends on you is to avoid anything that could in your life as missionaries, be displeasing to God’s heart, stop the flow of His blessings and thus bring about a downfall even more painful and irretrievable than the one that could come from outside (...) for the most serious reasons and out of fear of misfortunes that will be forever deplorable, I find myself obliged to put an end to the too frequent and too close relationships that existed almost everywhere between the sisters and the missionaries. I leave it to your Father

After a session by Fr. Peter Ekkut to the Mahagi Sisters
on the protection of children and vulnerable people.





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Superior to give you in this regard the clarifications and details which prudence prevents me from entrusting to paper. I will limit myself to saying that from several quarters at the same time, from persons who are very serious and least suspect of partiality, I have received observations and complaints about these multiple relationships and the calumnies which resulted from them. Having therefore weighed all these considerations before God, I have also decided to separate completely, at least for a time and until the congregations have grown older, the government of the sisters and that of the missionaries, as regards both their general and particular direction.” (Cardinal Lavigerie Anthology of texts, Volume V, p. 92- 104).

Our Founder was a visionary and a man of sure moral integrity; he knew all the damage that some behavior may cause: damage to people, damage to the proclamation of the Good News. May we draw from his example our determination and the integrity necessary for our mission.

Stephane Joulain

Integrity of the Ministry and its Consequences in the Apostolate



Sincerity and humility

Following recent reports of many instances of sexual abuse by priests and consecrated persons, Pope Francis wrote a strong letter to all the faithful people of God. This letter in fact is a cry. It is a cry expressing the embarrassment and the pain of the Pope and of the whole Church, in face of the scandals of sexual abuse and other abuses and their wounds. This cry unites with that of the victims who remained traumatised their whole life. As missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) we are all shaken, as are other congregations and Christian communities. At this point, the most important issue for us is not about who is behind these scandals, but more importantly, what these scandals reveal about our way of being as missionaries. As missionaries of Africa, perhaps this cry can help us draw lessons from the past so that we can become more attentive to the integrity of our ministry. This question invites us today to take a candid and less stereotypical look at this crisis, at people and cultures. No age limit, no pastoral experience, no culture is immune



Sharing during a session with religious men, women and diocesan priests of Mahagi diocese

to this evil. Everyone, regardless of age and missionary experience, is exposed to it.

Field experience

I had the opportunity of animating a session for some religious men, women and diocesan priests. I started the session by asking the participants to brainstorm on their thoughts about “sexual abuse” and “abuse of power”. The expressions of their faces convinced me they were not comfortable with these questions: it appeared unusual and required an exceptional amount of courage to face them. It is not surprising that stigmatization, mistrust, a culture of silence and taboo surround these subjects to some extent, depending on the setting. In general, I see that there is also a certain degree of mystification around these subjects. Fear of filing a complaint, of stigmatization and of justice, not to mention family ties, prevent people from speaking out and disclosing the cases they are familiar with, however well-known they may be.

Regarding our communities, some confreres accept the fact that there



are cases of sexual abuse as well as vulnerable adults, but to dismiss the issue they resort to stereotypical phrases such as: “but it is rare in Africa”, “it does not happen in our sector or in our community”, “homosexuality is less harmful than pedophilia”, “sleeping with a 17-year-old girl is not pedophilia because she came to me”. When it comes to signing the code of conduct in our society, some people feel that it is a trap. I know of some areas where the confrère in charge of the apostolate does not dare to communicate the information to the confrères. Instead he waits for problems to erupt before he starts quoting the main policies and rules. This explains in part the distrust of the confreres in this apostolate. We are seen as policemen on the lookout for infractions to incriminate. Therefore, a blockage on the subject!

The Society of Missionaries of Africa continues its pilgrimage 150 years after its foundation, amidst sorrows and joys, successes and difficulties, however, internal difficulties are still the most painful and destructive. The scandal of sexual abuse, abuse of power, addictive abuse and breach of trust is making the whole body of the Society suffer. Therefore, we try, not to seek out the victims, but rather to raise the awareness of confreres about what Pope Benedict XVI called “the open wound in the body of the Church” in general, and within our Society in particular.

Learning to combine discipline and humility

Our approaches may have their limits, we do not deny it. However, Truth is persistent. In fact, in the courtroom, the accused include not only political actors and economic operators, but also teachers, youth group leaders, parents and clergymen. We often underestimate the prevalence of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, but in practice, we have to admit that there are painful records and cases where the Society had to pay a heavy price. This article therefore seeks to provoke a reflection on the integrity of our ministry. The fact of being a Christian - especially a consecrated one - says Pope Francis “does not mean that we behave like a circle of privileged people who believe they have God in their pocket”.

It is important, therefore, to reflect on the severity of the rules to be



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adopted in all our establishments, in order to prevent similar occurrences and to follow the logic of Pope Francis who calls for a “never again” in our communities, sectors and provinces. It is also important that the Society be committed to the respect of the rights of both the victim and the accused; that it ensures that the truth goes with charity, both towards the victims and towards the accused, leading them on the path of healing and reconciliation both with themselves and with society.

“Prudence” is the key word.

“It is not enough for Caesar’s wife to be innocent, she must also appear to be innocent”, according to Plutarch, was the answer of the great Caesar concerning the repudiation of his wife Pompeia, suspected without concrete proof of extramarital relations with Clodius. The moral lesson of this story is that all public officials must not only be honest, but must also avoid any behavior that could call into question their integrity; in the Christian context, we call this PRUDENCE.

To live this prudence in the protection of minors and vulnerable people, it is important that missionaries respect the limits of the private



Fr. Peter Ekkut (in boubou) during a session with Missionary of Africa candidates studying philosophy in Kimbondo (Kinshasa)



During a campaign to raise awareness among young people in Mahagi's schools on "sexual assault".

spaces of our missionary communities in Africa. Several formation houses, fortunately, these days, insist on the prohibition of receiving visitors in our private spaces, namely our bedrooms and team rooms. This decision of the Formators or communities of the houses of formation is to be welcomed and encouraged; it shows the seriousness of our commitment and formation of future missionaries of Africa in the spirit of Cardinal Lavignerie who never ceased to emphasize this prudence in his letters to the first confreres.

Our world has changed, and this is true for everyone, including the clergy who were once considered as living saints on earth. I see here an urgent call to all: To learn to combine discipline and humility, both at the individual and community levels.

Peter Ekutt



Integrity of Ministry : A Ministry of Care



Since ministry began as we know it today, we have been challenged to regularly evaluate our approach to it. During my formative days (mid-nineties), the term Integrity of Ministry did not exist nor was the reality mentioned but one felt that there was an unspoken word in relation to Integrity of self and ministry and if it was embraced then, it would have complimented our approach to ministry and selfcare in all its aspects today. Thankfully today that attitude has changed and now our formation program incorporates this reality and hopefully better prepares our confreres for their daily missionary journeys and associated challenges.

Since I took my Oath in December 1996 like most of us we have held different and varied roles in the Society. Some of these roles we were prepared for and others by the nature of our calling we acquired without



much or no preparation. Looking back over my years of ministry I can honestly say that Integrity of Ministry has been the most challenging to the point of anger and frustration. From the moment of my first appointment till the present day I have been confronted personally and I also had to confront others in their approach to self-awareness and to ministry which has not been an easy task. The greatest challenge when confronting self and others is the image we portray and how we let our family and people we serve down. At times we take for granted our role in life and forget the role and image we portray to those we serve. There is a certain sense of arrogance attached to our calling, born out of history whereby people were fearful to confront us but this attitude has changed and people whom we serve are ready to confront, challenge and expose us if we step out of our role today.

My time in Ireland and now my return to South Africa have made it clear that our people want us to be truthful and honest to our calling. The number of workshops I attended and now through the giving of workshops in the Archdiocese of Johannesburg in relation to Safeguarding, I am constantly taken aback by the number of people attending such workshops. It suggests a cry from the people that we serve that they want us to respond to our calling with integrity. It also suggests that they are concerned about us and want to protect us to the point that they are ready to help, not cover up but help us if we go down a difficult path in our ministry and in our life.

We need to be proactive rather than reactive and develop a positive approach to Professional Supervision. I remember in our European Provincial Council I asked about supervision and I was told that we have it in Spiritual direction, respectively, Supervision is different from Spiritual Direction. As we are aware, prevention is better than cure and I believe that there is a need for Supervision whereby our needs and concerns are shadowed by a professional who recognises an emotional downward spiral. This is the case in Chaplaincy where one has to prove within a civil realm how often you attend supervision and like any professional counsellor today they have to do the same. Our ministry today has changed but the challenges still remain, are we humble enough to seek professional care for ourselves?



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As Missionaries of Africa, we have spent a lot of it in time and finance in “curing” confreres, but one has to ask would it not have been more productive to invest and encourage Professional Supervision whereby we would have a mirror to look into our lives and embrace our selfcare. All of us who call ourselves missionaries are confronted daily by the horrific personal stories of the people we serve which at times mirror’s our own stories. Once these stories are not cared for they can bring you into a “dark” place which in turn will affect you and your ministry. Our people want us to be true and honest in our activities and this can only be embraced if we are true and honest to ourselves.

This same reality needs to be embraced in our Missionary of Africa communities whereby we also need to be strong to confront and care for our fellow confreres if we see them going down a difficult path. We tend to turn to our superiors first, taking the easy option rather than caring and confronting the issue and confrere at hand. Our communities need to be a “place of safety” whereby we are cared for and felt cared for. At times our communities have been a place of pain and lacking in care. We need to develop communities which care for one another’s needs, not policing the community but using the skills we have acquired when dealing with the people we serve and enacting them in our immediate community. Living in a community where the issues are not spoken about (elephant in the corner) is very difficult and draws energy from oneself, community and our ministry.

Supervision is a means of selfcare and was mentioned at the last Chapter but it has remained there. Let all of us be humble enough to seek care by means of supervision before it is not too late and build on a ministry which is integral to the image of God.

Peter Joseph Cassidy



Nature itself reveals its beauty also thanks
to the discreet intervention of the gardener



Integrity in our ministry



Our attitude toward “integrity of ministry” is often influenced by the media, which places great emphasis on Church scandals in many areas, especially in the areas of finance and sexuality. We run the danger of negatively accepting the idea of integrity of ministry, more with a sense of self-defense than commitment, with the need to solve a problem more than with the desire to manifest God’s love and faithfulness and to participate in the healing of His people. Sometimes we forget that we are all involved in the integrity of the ministry by the mere fact that we are committed to the service of Jesus.

Jesus invites us to a specific lifestyle through our missionary vocation. In order to remain faithful to him, it is appropriate to be aware that all our feelings, words, actions, even secret ones, both personal and as a community, have repercussions in our personal and community life, in our pursuit of Jesus as well as in our pastoral initiatives.

The fault of David (2 Samuel 11) triggers our reflection. This fault would today be called abuse of power and/or sexual abuse. David did everything he could to keep it secret, inviting Uriah to come home; and when his initial strategy failed, he had to take a second, a more violent one: that of eliminating one of his best soldiers. David’s fault changed his motivation, since he asked Joab to forcibly lay siege to Rabba, causing Uriah’s death. David would never have given this order if he had



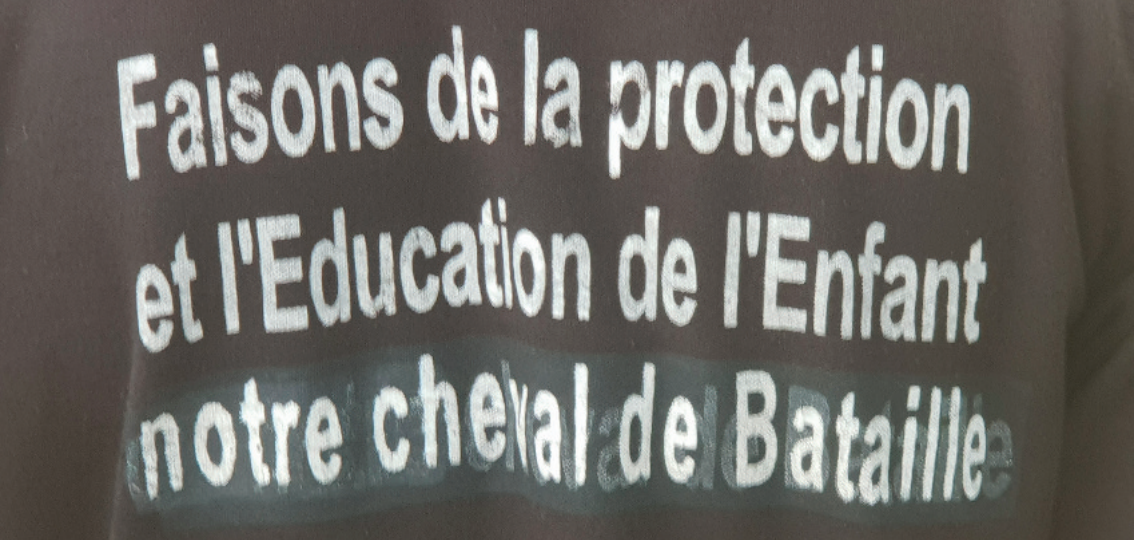
not committed this sin; the situation at hand had not changed at all because of his fault. David therefore obeyed a strayed motivation that had become very important to him. In short, there was something other than the war and the battle that preoccupied David.

This can be seen from the text of the Bible. However, we can speculate by including other plausible elements. How did Joab feel when he carried out the king's order? What did the experienced soldiers think of the king's decision? They must have realized that this armed engagement was in vain and that it would bring nothing to the war. Did it increase their confidence in the king? What did the royal servants with whom Uriah had slept a few days earlier think? And did Bathsheba, the mother of the dead child and of Solomon, feel responsible for the death of her husband? The basis of her marriage to David appears to be shaky. What happens to the integrity of the king himself? So many consequences, many beyond one's control...

Our missionary Oath (Constitutions and Laws n. 54) contains its requirements. In fact, with words like "Gospel, mission, obedience, apostolic charity, celibacy, common life", our Oath involves our whole being, in all its dimensions, personal, community, emotional, sexual, professional, intellectual, social, and spiritual (Matthew 22:36-40). We would not be faithful to it, neither to Jesus nor to the mission, by consciously and voluntarily putting a limit to it in any aspect. We would be exposing ourselves to walk in David's footsteps. The mission entrusted to us, our community life, our apostolate, our prayer, our own person and our closeness to the people would be affected, since our motivations would be diverted from the mission. A lack of integrity has consequences both on the mission and on the person of the missionary.

Let us be aware that the integrity of the ministry is the fruit of the integrity of the person himself. Without it, the integrity of the person is constantly threatened. Our personal integrity in the ministry creates the inner freedom necessary to see what is happening in and around us and to discern the appropriate apostolate to set it in motion.

Our missionary vocation and the charism that accompanies it provide us with a very special and unique lifestyle that brings us closer to people,

A dark-colored t-shirt with white text printed on it. The text is in French and reads: "Faisons de la protection et l'Education de l'Enfant notre cheval de Bataille".

Faisons de la protection
et l'Education de l'Enfant
notre cheval de Bataille

Let's make the protection and education of the child our priority.

that makes us seek the presence of God in all our encounters and apostolates. In order to remain faithful to the end, it is crucial first of all to “love this lifestyle”, our lifestyle, with all its implications.

Integrity of ministry offers us a new field of collaboration wherever we are and with a wide variety of individuals. This field is so new that none of us can claim total knowledge of it. Experienced missionary, newly ordained, consecrated lay person, parish council member, catechist, we are all confronted by this important dimension of our apostolate which we do not master well. Integrity in ministry invites us to collaborate with all to develop sensitivity towards a permanent human reality, especially to people who are exploited and abused because of the actions of others and who need consolation and support from us and from the witness of our own integrity as well.

Using the words of Vatican II, we are in the presence of a sign of the times. To express the same reality with an expression of the Missionaries of Africa, here is a zone of fracture and according to Pope Francis, a periphery.

John Lamonde

Integrity in Ministry, its Effects on the Apostolate



Integrity connotes a state of being whole and not divided; it also entails personal qualities of being honest, sincere and truthful and having strong moral principles. As Missionaries of Africa, all along our initial formation program from aspirancy and through the different formation phases, in keeping with the Constitutions and Laws of our Society, it is emphasized that the nature and content of our formation and the ways in which it is carried out be dictated by the missionary spirit of the Society, enabling all of us to attain a certain level of integrity in ministry (C&L 108). Indeed, this is the type of formation we all received.

Being beneficiaries of such a rich formation experience therefore, the word integrity in ministry isn't really a new term for confreres, though it might have been more accentuated during the last General Chapter that saw the setting up of a permanent desk in the Generalate for the Coordinator for Integrity in Ministry.

Integrity in ministry, in a nutshell, encapsulates our own identity as missionaries "Called to be witness to the gospel, we want, like the Apostles to be trained by Christ" (C&L 107) in prayer, through study, in our intellectual, community and apostolic life, in relating to people, minors and adults, young and old, men and women, etc. Integrity in ministry is like a mirror that reflects who a missionary is and how he ought to be in the field of the apostolate.



Integrity in ministry and the apostolate

Integrity in ministry has its effects in the apostolate. Our founder insisted so much that we, missionaries, be “all things to all people”, “omnia et omnibus”, “être tout à tous” (1 Cor 9:22).” I believe there is no way one possibly can live “le tout à tous” of our founder Cardinal Lavigerie and of St Paul, if there is a breach in one’s integrity in ministry. There is a correlative relationship between one’s integrity in ministry and one’s apostolate. The two shouldn’t be separated from each other. When our ministry lacks integrity, our apostolate suffers gravely and the rest of the missionary encounters with the people are affected too.

An old confrere once told me that we can achieve many things in our apostolate, constructions of schools, hospitals, churches and other buildings, but when our ministry lacks integrity, all that we have achieved will be overshadowed and this do harm to our apostolate.

What we become and who we are in our missionary relationships and encounters define our apostolate with the people of God. We have seen in the recent years that the image of the Church has been tarnished due to different financial, sexual scandals and a long list of child sexual abuses that have haunted the church for some decades now. These,



After a session with students in Goma



Confreres in Goma posing with a group of children

obviously have left an impact on how we carry out our apostolate in the Church; we can no longer remain indifferent, things have changed. What used to be taken for granted can no longer be taken that way. Seminary and formation programs in general in the Church have to be adapted and revised to the present reality. Our own ways of doing apostolate have to be revised for preventive measures in order to uphold integrity in ministry and not merely for witch-hunting reasons. Policies on child protection and new codes of conducts for the integrity of the members of each congregation and society have to be implemented. These might not have been key-priority issues some decades back. Different and new measures have been put in place to enhance integrity in ministry and make our places of apostolate safer for all people, young and adults, children and vulnerable people.

The success in our apostolate depends therefore, to a big extent, on the integrity of its ministers; our founder Cardinal Lavigerie had seen this from the beginning of our Society “Be Apostles and nothing but apostles”. The more integrity there is in our ministry, the healthier and the more balanced will be our apostolate.



P. Michel Della Faille with primary school children

How this idea is perceived in the field by different confreres

Obviously different confreres hold different views on the integrity in ministry, but the underlying truth remains. We are all looking for a way of proclaiming the gospel of the Lord in the manner that Jesus Christ taught us. “Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs’. Then he laid his hands on them and went on his way (Mt 19:14-15).”

To some confreres, integrity in ministry means rigorous observance of every detail and aspect of community, spiritual, social and apostolic life, while others are more liberal in their understanding. Whatever may be the understanding, our call to integrity in ministry is imbedded in our missionary Oath, and thus calls for the fidelity of each one of us in our everyday commitments so as to reinforce what we already committed ourselves to with our missionary Oath (C&L 55).

In conclusion, it may be good to insist that our commitment to integrity in ministry is in a way a realization of our vocational responsibility that we freely chose to take on the day of our missionary Oath in the Society. Our integrity in the ministry is indeed a key to a successful apostolate and a gateway towards true apostolic joy, “You will know them by their fruits...I repeat therefore, by their fruits, you will know them (Mt 7: 15-20)”.

Lowrent Thokozani Kamwaza

The Church and Entrepreneurship vs. dependency syndrome



Back to Our Roots:

It is impressive, and more so, encouraging to see that some of our young confreres approach their pastoral ministry from a holistic stance. Petit Echo 2020/06, pages 10-11 explicates to us typical example of pastoral work in its wholeness, which should not be taken for granted, but rather imitated. The text reads in part, “Our Missionaries of Africa community in Kipaka has for some years now set itself the goal of continuing to raise the parishioners’ awareness about self-reliance ... From the year 2019 onwards; our community has made it a duty to be exemplary in the area of self-sufficiency. We have cultivated fields of rice, cassava, peanuts and sweet potatoes on the land of the parish ... As for the care and protection of the environment, the community have already planted a good number of fruit trees.” This initiative is an excellent revamp of our fore-missionaries who contextualized accordingly their missionary life and pastoral ministry. They worked hard, and did not wait for the manna from heaven. The principle of self-reliance was in their ‘blood system’ – ‘Ora et Labora’! This is typical and pragmatic of the ‘mission and entrepreneurship against dependency syndrome’.



Kipaka's confreres in their cassava fields

Dependency Syndrome:

A few years ago on my way to a town called Osogbo I had a problem with my motorbike and I was obliged to spend the night in a Parish. The priests were very kind and accommodative. However, the presbytery was in an 'unfortunate state' of 'unkemptness' and not maintained. The priests were lamenting and complaining on how poor the Parish was and how the parishioners were mean, lacking in generosity. The following morning I was privileged to have a look at the Church and the compound around. The mission land was massive and untouched. It looked as if it were a virgin land – rich fertile soil. The possibility of investing in farming was simply unspeakable. The possibility of sustainability not only for the priests but also for the Church was just amazing. One could even ask, "What else do you want, manna from heaven?"

That experience was a challenge for me, and in my thoughts I told myself, "If at all I get such a piece of land, poverty won't be my portion. In fact, poverty would take off just like the two demoniacs whom Jesus cast away in Mt. 8:28-34" Indeed, the Parish would never be the same. It would become one of the rich Parishes. The dependency syndrome and complaining spirit and blaming of the parishioners would be a story of the past. The Mission and Entrepreneurship for sustainability would be our portion!

Dependency on the North Pole:

In the last hundred years, many Catholic dioceses and Catholic religious congregations in Africa have economically survived by presenting project proposals to various Catholic funding agencies in Europe and America. However, there is now a shift from donor dependence to financial sustenance whereby Church donor agencies are challenging the local Church on the continent to transform their assets into profit making avenues. It is a fact that the Church has a lot of assets and land is one of the fixed assets which you find in many of the parishes. Thanks to the missionaries who had such a focused vision, who saw the reality of life beyond their nose. Thus, instead of this asset (land) lying idle and undeveloped, can't it be transformed into Church entrepreneurship for sustainability? Can't priests or religious, especially those whose life-style is based on 'dependency syndrome' transform such life-style into a self-reliance style in order to support the efforts of parishioners in sustaining the Church and themselves too? Can't the 'Collaborative Ministry' pointed out in the last communiqué of the Bishops Ibadan Ecclesiastical Province, be extended to the 'Church and Entrepreneurship' by involving the Laity with their expertise beginning from the Small Christian Community or Church Society level to the Parish level in its pragmatic term? In fact, the Covid-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for us missionaries or pastors of the Church to reflect seriously on this point knowing fully well that many of our parishioners struggle to maintain and sustain their families.

Fruit tree nursery





With intensive supervision, some of the land owned by the Church or Parishes could be transformed into income generating projects which will make pastors' ministries and institutions financially stable and sustainable. Institutions such as Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), Archdiocese of Ibadan and OFFER Centre Institute of Agriculture, Osun State, Nigeria, and others of such nature, are practical examples which can assist us and the Church to go beyond that dependency syndrome. Cat-fish projects and agricultural trainings respectively, are an open space for learning the principles, skills and experience of sustainability. It is impressive to see that some seminarians and religious of the Archdiocese of Ibadan are keen on such training. Our own formation too, should continue to emphasise this aspect. The future may be bright for them even if they don't become priests or religious. Skills and knowledge remain an investment for sustainability if positively utilised or executed.

Conclusion:

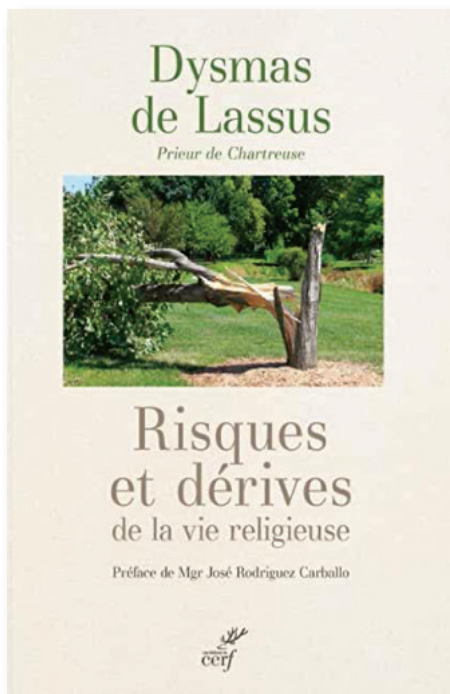
There is a social-economic philosophy that actually inspires Pope Francis to call upon the Church to explore the impact of investing. In his papal exhortation *Laudato Si*, he urges the Church and people of good will to ethically "... rediscover; experience and proclaim to everyone the precious and primordial unity between profit and solidarity." Indeed, he further states, "How much the contemporary world needs to rediscover this beautiful truth" (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On the Care of Our Common Home*, no. 15).

Pastors and Parishes, dioceses and religious congregations such as ours can locally generate some revenues that would eventually finance their ministries. Of course, some of our Parishes, Sectors and Provinces are already venturing into it. This is something to be appreciated and encouraged. However, all this should be done in moderation and not in a selfish, individualistic and capitalistic spirit or approach. The Mission and Entrepreneurship should be handled positively without neglecting or taking into account work ethics as stipulated in the Social Teaching of the Church (SCT).

James Ngahy



Dysmas de Lassus (Prior of Chartreuse), *Risques et dérives de la vie religieuse*, Paris, Ed. du Cerf, 2020, 446 pages.



Dysmas de Lassus is the current Prior of the Grande Chartreuse and is, therefore, the Superior General of the Carthusian Order. In his preface to this book, Bishop José Rodríguez Carballo, Secretary of the Congregation for Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, notes: “Rooted in the long tradition of monastic life and in a solid theology of religious life, Dom Dysmas de Lassus... proposes here some diagnostic elements that will allow us to assess the dangers of certain spiritual practices or the governance of communities. He also develops a proposal on the main checks and balances that allow for personal and community growth

in respect for individuals and the Catholic tradition. “Commitment to religious life is a passionate love of God with its extremes, but calls for some restrictions. Some founders of new communities or superiors of communities may go beyond these limits and use their authority or charism as founders to exercise a spiritual hold that can go as far as sexual abuse, as do founders of sects. Based on the testimonies of victims under this grip and these abuses, the author describes the process of sectarian aberration of certain new communities emerging from the so-called charismatic movement. The book has 13 chapters. The first speaks of the passionate love of those who commit themselves to religious life, with a desire to go to the very end, and emphasizes that this can lead the leader to have a total control over the members of his or her community. The second chapter analyzes the establishment of a sectarian aberration which leads the members of a community incapable of expressing per-



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sonal thoughts and maltreating themselves in order to comply with the will of the authority. The third speaks of the tension between the charisma of the founder and the institution, the framework of community life, necessary for the proper functioning of the community. The fourth chapter speaks of common life and of authority and obedience, which can lead the leader to restrict interactions between members, control their thoughts, flatter some, only accept a single way of thinking, and to confuse the unity of the community with uniformity. The fifth chapter speaks of the relationship with the outside world which imposes secrecy, the reading of mail, and the limits imposed on an outside confessor. The sixth speaks of obedience that becomes blind obedience. The seventh speaks of asceticism and renunciation within the framework of a spirituality taken to the extreme. The eighth speaks of spiritual direction which becomes total control and submission to the superior, depriving the one being accompanied of any capacity for discernment. The ninth points out how spiritual abuse happens and the tenth is on how sexual abuse happens to both religious men and women. The eleventh emphasizes the need of placing at the center the past, present and future victims of these abuses of religious life. The twelfth invites us to take a lucid look and proposes elements of redress and prevention in order to set up an immune system against these risks and abuses. The last invites us to contemplate the unassuming beauty of communities that live in simplicity, that live from the fruits of the Spirit, in humility and truth, with fervor and freedom, in mutual trust, fraternal and joyful love.

Guy Vuillemin

Paul Hannon

1947 - 2019



Matthew Paul Hannon was born on 6th Nov 1947 into a warm, welcoming Catholic family and baptised two weeks later in Ss. Peter and Paul, South Shields. He was always known as Paul. His early education saw him graduate from St. Cuthbert's Grammar School in 1965. He went on to qualify as a teacher, taking his degree from Hopwood Hall, a department of the Victoria University of Manchester. Having taught locally for a couple of years, Paul was accepted by the VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas). This organisation sent him to teach En-

glish in Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria from 1972-1974. It was here that Paul first came into contact with the White Fathers. Here, too, began his life-long interest in the Arabic language and Muslim culture. Later on, 1977-81, he went to teach in Qatar. During this time Paul's missionary vocation was developing and back in the UK he was about to be offered the post of headmaster. However, instead of accepting this post, he chose to join the White Fathers.

From 1985-87, Paul took up residence at Oak Lodge while studying at the M.I.L. (The Missionary Institute London). Then he went to Switzerland for his Spiritual Year and for his final years of training for the priesthood he was sent to Toulouse. This suited Paul who was already very much at home in French. Some of his many other talents such as art and gardening began to manifest themselves. Paul took his missionary oath on 15th December 1990 and was ordained priest July 6th 1991 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Paul's first appointment was to the Sudan, to New Halfa. He arrived



in Khartoum September 1991 and was met at the airport by Fr. Jan Geypens and Fr. Marshall, a Sudanese priest. He really appreciated their warm welcome before accompanying Fr. Guido Kramer to New Halfa for his first mission. And it was a tough one from the beginning but Paul loved it. The physical and material conditions, which they shared with the people, were demanding. Most of the parishioners had come from Wadi Halfa or the South. They were people displaced from their places of origin, a fact which lent itself to many social problems as well as religious and political tensions. In his customary kind and efficient way, Paul immersed himself in the ministry. He appeared to be quite robust but there was already an underlying health problem manifest by his hypertension. This seemed to be under control but there were times when the unreliable supply chain meant that he had no medication! Even so, it was here that Paul developed his enduring love for the Sudan and its people. He tried to come ever closer to the people and continued, with good success, to master the Arabic language.

And so it was that in 1993 he was sent for studies to the PISAI. He continued to maintain contact with the Sudan and during his hol-

idays, visa permitting, he would return from time to time.

After his studies, in 1995, Paul was appointed again to New Halfa. The conditions were as harsh and demanding as they had been during his previous appointment there. His ministry was as rich and varied as it was difficult. And, then, at the beginning of 1997, Paul suffered a heart attack and had to be brought back to the UK immediately. When he was finally admitted to Hammersmith Hospital, the doctor marvelled at how he had been able to travel from New Halfa to Khartoum in the state he was in. However, the operation was a success and, according to the consultant's letter of 19th May, Paul had recovered well.

During this period of recuperation, Paul accepted to be acting Provincial Secretary in Stormont Rd. until another appointment came along for him in July 1998. He was asked to become lecturer and, eventually, director of studies at the PISAI. Not only was his gift for teaching and organisation much valued but also his gift for beautifying with flowers the cool, marble corridors of the staff living quarters was much appreciated. As always, Paul would maintain contact with the Sudan and, visa permitting,



would try to lend a helping hand there during his holidays.

In May 2003, Paul was once again appointed to the Sudan, this time to Hajj Yousif, Khartoum. The conditions and circumstances for mission here were quite different from New Halfa but just as arduous. There were many displaced people in huge camps around the capital. The social outreach of the mission was stretched way beyond its limits. Paul was involved in so many things while trying also to develop good relations with the local Muslim communities. But the discrimination against Christians by a fundamentalist Muslim regime was palpable.

Now, the Small Formation Community in Nairobi was looking for a formator. Paul was asked to go there as rector from 2005-08. At the same time he became a lecturer at Tangaza College. In 2008 he returned to Khartoum where he was elected councillor. Two years later he went to Jerusalem for the Easter Session which he so enjoyed and benefitted from so much. The letters he wrote to his family and friends are still a joy to read.

At this time he was appointed as Superior Delegate in the UK with a mandate from 1st July 2011

until 30th June 2014. On top of the daily routine in running the Sector there were some situations which had become intractable. These took their toll on Paul. He remained generous and kind and well-organised but he was pushing himself. Amazingly, almost every day, with his underlying hypertension and emphysema, he was still taking a 10km walk!

At the end of his mandate Paul was appointed back to PISAI as a lecturer. Two years later he was, then, appointed back to Hajj Yousif. But Paul's strength and energy were being sapped in this most difficult of missions. And so, in 2017, it was thought wise to ask him to become Secretary to EAP. There were many other demands on his time, as moderator for various groups, as retreat preacher but, alas, major health problems obliged him to return to the UK. He was welcomed by the community in LEL who gave him all the support they could. The NHS and the carers wove their magic to help him cope with ailing heart and lungs. But on 28th March 2019 'weary and old with service', surrounded by love and fortified by the rites of Holy Mother Church he gave up his spirit.

A Confrere of the Sector



Jean-Yves Chevalier

1948 - 2020



Jean-Yves was born on June 2, 1948 in Saint Florent-le-Vieil. Saint-Florent-le-Vieil is a former French commune located in the department of Maine-et-Loire, in the Pays de la Loire. During the insurrection of la Vendée in the XVIII century, it was one of the first municipalities to take up arms (1793); it became a hot spot of the Vendée war.

Jean-Yves joined the Missionaries of Africa after high school. His first stay in Africa was during the two years of the so called coopération which replaced national service. He taught at the Brothers of the Holy Family in Saaba, near Ouagadougou, in Upper Volta. On his return, he was

sent to Strasbourg for his theological studies. It was there that he took his Missionary Oath, in Strasbourg, on April 16, 1977, and was ordained priest the following year, on June 18, in the town of La Boutouchère, in the commune of Saint-Florent-le-Vieil.

Appointment in Upper Volta

He was reappointed to Upper Volta, this time in the diocese of Kaya. In September 1978, he was in Guilongou, near Ouagadougou, at the language school for Moore. In April 1979, he arrived in the diocese of Kaya and was appointed to Tougouri. He stayed there from 1979 to 1984. In 1983, doctors made a diagnosis of bone cancer, which would later lead to his death. He had to undergo painful chemotherapy treatments. In September 1984, he was appointed to Tema-Bokin. There he worked a lot with young people. He started a training center for them, through which a great number of them learned a trade or started small workshops that would help them to become self-sufficient. Many young people in Tema-Bokin owe him a great debt of gratitude. His illness gave him some relief at the time so he was able to continue his



work at Téma-Bokin. In 1988 he even became parish priest.

Missions in France and Burkina Faso

At the end of 1988, however, he had to return to Paris to be closer to medical centers and he eventually specialized in the media. He followed a course in journalism in Paris and perfected his computer skills. In 1993, the province of France asked him to take over the responsibility of publishing the magazine “Voix d’Afrique”. He set to work with remarkable talent and professionalism. Everyone appreciated his work. The community of rue du Printemps, a house that has since been sold, was where he settled and worked with a group of confrères in the management and subscriptions of the magazine.

In 1995, he was able to return to Africa, though still monitored for his cancer, and was appointed to Koudougou where he started a publication of the journal called G’dit. A number of young people he had known at Téma-Bokin, joined this service which rendered a lot of valuable services in Koudougou and in Ouagadougou.

In 2002, following another health issue, he decided to take a year’s sabbatical. He followed with interest the

mid-life session in Rome in 2002, and at the end of 2003, he was appointed to the Province of France. He moved to the provincial house in rue Verlomme, where he served as provincial secretary for several years.

From March 15 to June 11, 2011, he participated in the session retreat in Jerusalem. He had long wished for this stay in the Holy Land. Upon his arrival, he wrote: “I am discovering the Holy City: its walls, the esplanade of the Temple, the first churches that I do not yet know and, by chance, the window of my room gives onto the golden dome of the Rock. A light breeze brings me the sweet fragrance of a flowering lilac. Also amazing are a myriad of birds chirping, cooing, and trilling joyfully. I had never, in the course of my travels, experienced such a feeling: these places take me deep inside. These streets, these ramparts, these hills are as though inhabited by a mysterious and powerful Presence.

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“Voix d’Afrique” magazine

Weakened by the advancing illness, in 2016 he was appointed to the community of rue Friant in Paris, where the province once again entrusted him with the publication of the magazine “Voix d’Afrique” (Voice of Africa). There again a small team supported him in the direction and management.



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He was responsible only for the computerized production of the magazine. He worked for three years at rue Friant.

In 2019, he accepted to join the community of Bry-sur-Marne. His state of health had deteriorated considerably that he had to be regularly monitored for his bone cancer, as well as heart problems. In the meantime, he had spent so much time in the hospital that he became tired of treatments. From time to time, he frequented the Foch hospital center in Suresnes, near Paris, and the Pompidou Center in Paris itself for heart-related problems. In the basement of the community of Bry-sur-Marne, a room was set up where he could continue his work on the magazine “Voice d’Afrique”.

Clément Forestier, who was the superior in Bry-sur-Marne and who was very talented in the writing of articles, accompanied him during the last months when Jean-Yves was more and more handicapped. He was soon entrusted with the responsibility of editing the magazine. Jean-Yves was hospitalized again at the beginning of January 2020 and returned to our house of Bry-sur-Marne very weak. He passed away on February 27, 2020 and his funeral was celebrated a few days before the confinement was declared with the entire rigor we know. His family and many

African friends took part in the celebration in the community of Bry-sur-Marne and his burial in the vault of the Missionaries of Africa at the cemetery of Bry-sur-Marne.

Jean-Yves’ missionary life was very much marked by illness and suffering. His bone cancer, diagnosed as early as 1983, was later complicated by heart problems that forced him to undergo additional treatments. When his father died in 2018, he was unable to attend his funeral as he himself was hospitalized. For him this was a great additional suffering. It was undoubtedly the companionship of suffering that also led him to question his missionary vocation, but each time he knew, with the help of his confreres, how to leave courageously for the service of the mission.

In his homily, in the chapel of Bry-sur-Marne, on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, our confrere Clément Forestier painted a beautiful portrait of Jean-Yves: sensitive, attentive to those around him, devoted in his work, he knew how to ensure this missionary press service up to the end. He spent his missionary life in Burkina Faso and, at his funeral, Burkinabés, friends and students, were there to bid him farewell. Thank you, Jean-Yves, for all that you have been and all that you have done. You can now rest in peace.

Alain Fontaine

Louis Faivre-Rampant

1934 - 2020



Louis was born on March 13, 1934 in Le Bélieu, a small village in Franche-Comté, in the diocese of Besançon. His father's name was Louis and his mother's name was Madeleine Vermot-Desroches. His parents were farmers who look after their eight children: 3 girls and 5 boys, Louis being the 4th. They were a devoted Christian family. "Louis was always much attached to his family, parents, brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. I testify to this because I knew the family very well, just as he knew mine very well". After primary education in his village, Louis entered the diocesan minor

seminary of Maîche. It was there that he met several White Fathers who were visiting, in particular Father Py. In 1953 he joined the White Fathers' seminary in Bonnelles, and then went to the philosophy seminary in Kerlois in 1955. In 1957, he entered the novitiate in Gap, pleased to have found an international community there. At the end of his novitiate, the novice master wrote of him: "He is cheerful, open, and active, rather oriented towards practical work, cultivating the land; esteemed by his confreres because he is charitable, likes to joke, always ready to be of service". In 1958, Louis went to Carthage for theology, which was interrupted for 28 months by his national service from 1959 to 1961. After completing the Ecole des Officiers (E.O.R), he was sent to Algeria where he remained from May 1960 to January 1961. This stay in Algeria during the time of war would have a lasting impact on his life.

Louis took his missionary Oath on June 26, 1963 in Carthage and was ordained priest in Besançon on June 29, 1964. He liked to recall how he became involved in trans-



ferring the body of Cardinal Lav-
gerie which is now at the Gener-
alate in Rome.

Mission in West Africa

Louis was appointed at his re-
quest to the Diocese of Nzérékoré
in Guinea. After a three-month pas-
toral internship in Mours, he de-
parted from Marseilles in December
1964 and landed in Monrovia,
Liberia. His bishop, Monsignor
Maillat, appointed him to Beyla in
Malinké country. He began by
learning the language before taking
his share of tours in the villages,
until he was expelled by Sekou
Touré, President of Guinea, in 1966,
like all his confreres. He then joined
the diocese of Bobo-Dioulasso in
Upper Volta. Bishop André Dupont
appointed him bursar of the minor
seminary of Nasso.

In December 1968, he returned
to France for his leave. Thanks to
many welcome celebrations, he
gained a lot of weight, from 75 to
100 kg, a weight which, rather than
diminishing, increased and caused
him difficulties in walking.

In September 1969, he arrived
in Orodara, still in Upper Volta. It
was a very big parish, with 8 dif-
ferent ethnic groups, but most of
them understood Dioula, a language

close to Malinke that Louis already
knew. Apart from Christian civil
servants, nurses and teachers, there
were not many Christians, some-
times none in most villages. The
tours consisted of visiting the vil-
lages and participating in their daily
life. In 1974, he participated in the
great Siamou initiation in the village
of Bandougou. The catechism is
mainly done in the primary school
that existed in a few larger vil-
lages.

Louis was very active both in
his apostolate – visiting people in
villages - and in the more practical
aspects of life to the benefit of the
community and to the support of
those in need. He left a pleasant
memory to all the friends he had
in Burkina.

During his leave, in 1973, he
participated in the long retreat in
Italy at Villa Cavaletti, and on his
return, he was appointed to Tous-
siana. He returned to Orodara in
1980 and to Konadougou in 1984.
Following Thomas Sankara's take-
over, Upper Volta then became
Burkina Faso. In 1992, he partici-
pated in the session and retreat in
Jerusalem, and in 1993, he arrived
in Niangoloko, close to Ivory Coast,
where he stayed until 2002, when
he returned definitively to France.



In France

When he arrived at the White Fathers' retirement home in Billère, one of his hobbies was to take people in his car on sightseeing trips to Spain, pilgrimages to Lourdes and for medical visits. As often as possible, also, he went to visit his family in Franche-Comté. In 2005, still by car, he went to Rome to take part in the session for the seniors. These repeated absences led the superiors to appoint him in 2012 to Mours where he was freer to travel. However, after a slight car accident at an intersection, Louis was severely affected and had a major nervous breakdown. His family had planned to celebrate his 50 years of priesthood, but he opposed it outright. Given the seriousness of his psychological state, he was brought back to the community of Billère on October 26, 2014.

The superior of Billère had this to say: "Louis is spending the last years of his life at Billère. He is in

a state of near 'lethargy'. He hardly responds to anyone who speaks to him, without ever taking any initiative. A better sensitivity was perceived after a stay in an establishment in Dax". He himself then wrote thankfully: "I came out of the tunnel!" But this improvement was not really seen.

Louis always remained faithful to community life and, depending on his confreres for his mobility, he expressed his gratitude to them. He died at the clinic in Aresly, near Pau, where he had been admitted for various medical examinations made necessary by his state of health. He died in the evening of March 8, 2020. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, only two of his confreres and one of his nieces were present at the cemetery.

We remember Louis as a confrere who led a very active life, after which he waited patiently for meeting the Lord who came to reward his faithful servant.

François Jaquinod



Pierre Lafollie

1938 - 2020



Pierre was born in Reims, eastern France, on January 30, 1938, in a family of 8 children, of which one younger sister died in her infancy. The parents gave a good religious education to their children. His father was a public works illustrator.

Pierre completed his secondary education at the minor seminary of La Providence, in Reims, and then with the White Fathers, in Bonnelles. In 1957, he went to Kerlois. He did his novitiate at Gap in 1959. In September 1960, he began his scholasticate in Carthage and was sent to Bizerte on July 17,

1961 after a year in theology, a he was called up for national service but was released from such duty on medical grounds. He was then asked to continue his studies at Totteridge. He was committed to learning English, a language that would later be of great service to him in Zambia.

Pierre took his missionary oath in Totteridge on February 7, 1964, and was ordained a priest in Rheims on June 29, 1964. His studies with the White Fathers initially were not particularly easy. Pierre was gifted with a good intellectual capacity, but he was very timid, rather nervous. Like many great timid people, he could shut himself away in his room, and on occasion, become obstinate, curt and sure of himself. His superiors were very reluctant to let him continue his studies with the White Fathers, finding him to be possible “schizoid”, that is to say, a difficulty in forming social bonds because of an inclination for solitude and independence. They referred him to a psychotherapist who, fortunately, reassured his worried superiors that Pierre was perfectly well



balanced, but his big problem came from a certain speech defect which impaired his elocution. Pierre would follow the doctor's advice to minimize this difficulty, which however was to last his entire life, and which made him suffer a great deal, though he would never complain. When you knew the man of relationships that Pierre would become, you probably wondered how it came about that he had such a difficult start to his missionary life.

Pierre had great intellectual capacities. He was slow and steady in his work, sometimes overly perfectionist. He proved to be very helpful. He also enjoyed manual work, such as gardening. As the years went by, he became very pleasant to be with; a gentleman who liked to chat in the community, who was interested in different topics and who liked to read a lot.

Mission in Zambia

He was appointed to Zambia and arrived in the Diocese of Abercorn (Mbala) in 1965. Over the years, he was appointed to various parishes, most of them rural, where he served as curate or parish priest. In chronological order, Ilondola (Bemba learning center), Kayambi, Lwitikila, Ilondola again, Serenje, Mulanga, Chalabesa and Kopa,

Mulanga again, Isoka, Mulilansolo where he was appointed director of the school for catechists, then Mpika where he was appointed coordinator of pastoral work for the Diocese of Mbala. In 1999, he moved to the SFC of Lualuo, in Kasama, from where he took care of the archives of the archdiocese. In 2005, he was appointed to Lusaka (Woodlands), where he is mainly involved in research on Bemba culture and translations.

Of course, during these long years, he would take his home leave at times for medical reasons. He had serious problems with his spine (he underwent several operations), he also attended the sessions in Jerusalem 1980.

We have very little documentation of his missionary life in Zambia. Pierre was a hard-working confrere, always ready to go anywhere and to give himself generously and passionately to his work. From his stay in parishes, he took the opportunity to learn the language and to research the Bemba culture, research that would serve him well in the future. Father Jean-Pierre Sauge (regional at the time) wrote these few lines to describe him, when Pierre had just been appointed, in 1992, as coordinator of pastoral



work in the diocese of Mbala: “His function is completely in line with his abilities and his interest; it is only a pity that his speech defect makes communication with him a little difficult. But his capacity for work and clarity partly compensated for this”. Pierre lived a very simple lifestyle, always available to give a haircut or a helping hand in the parish, to help out with his old car or transport someone... when it was not broken down!

Pierre was extremely generous, helping people in difficulty, families with orphans and paying for their education. When his death was announced, many of these people testified with emotion how much he had helped them, not only financially, but also spiritually.

A remarkable fact about Pierre is that he gave full attention to the people who came to him: confreres, diocesan priests, sisters of the local congregations and lay leaders. It is not surprising, therefore, that so many messages of condolence were sent from Zambia expressing regret and appreciation for Pierre’s beautiful life and work.

Pierre studied the Bemba culture extensively, sometimes with other confreres, and was always in touch with Bemba families who were

very close to him, and about whom he often spoke with emotion. Pierre did a lot of research on the Bemba initiation rites.

Work on Bemba Culture

Pierre returned to France for good on November 15, 2016. It was after a series of medical check-ups that he was appointed to the community of Mours. He was an easygoing and ever smiling confrere. He spent a lot of time on his computer in his room working on the compilations of Bemba proverbs gathered by other confreres. He completed the final text of a book on initiation into the Bemba culture (“Ifimbusa”). He typed the (often illegible) calligraphic journal of Bishop Motomoto (Dupont), and showed phenomenal patience in all these meticulous undertakings. He had asked not to be in town. In Mours, he often worked in the park, especially to prune the hedges (he was tall), pull out the ivy, collect and assemble the dead branches. In the evening, he often recited his rosary in the gardens; his sense of observation allowed him to notify those in charge of the grounds of any problems.

Pierre, despite all his knowledge, remained a simple man, very calm, and never domineering. He preferred



to remain in the background rather than in the spotlight. His kindness, sincerity, sense of justice, deep faith has guided many confreres, couples, families, people in difficulty. His specialty was the family apostolate, which enabled him to accompany many in their joys and sorrows, to contribute to many research projects on Bemba culture and to the publication of books.

At the end of March 2020, Pierre, who had not been well for some days, was urgently hospitalized in the hospital of Pontoise, where it

was discovered that he had Covid-19. His condition worsened rapidly. A confrere, invited by the doctor, was allowed to visit him at the hospital a few hours before his departure. He prayed with Pierre, in Bemba, the two of them very emotional. The next morning, Pierre was gone.

Thank you, Pierre! Continue to guide us in this land where you were a guide and a light for many, a humble and joyful witness of the One who chose you to be the bearer of the Good News in Africa.

Jean-Louis Godinot
and Jean-Pierre Sauge



Henri Frouin

1931 - 2020



Henri was born on February 8, 1931 into a modest family from Saint-Macaire en Mauges, in the diocese of Angers. Henri was only 4 years old when his father died. It was his mother who brought him up and who rooted him in the deep faith of this region. At a very early age, he thought about the priesthood and he entered the minor seminary of Beaupréau in 1943. But he had great difficulty with his studies and was advised to change his orientation. Since he held on to his vocation, he turned to the White Fathers who received him in their Minor Seminary in Saint-Laurent d'Olt.

He quickly realized that he was not suited to pursue a classical formation in view of the priesthood, so he was advised to consider the missionary vocation as a brother, which he accepted generously.

Thus, in September 1948, he entered the Brothers' postulancy in Antilly. One year later, he received the gandoura at the novitiate in Tournus. He did his second year of novitiate at Bonnelles. He was then called up for military service, which he did as a driver for the dragon regiment at Fontevault. The military chaplain was full of praise for his "excellent and exemplary conduct". It was with joy that he returned to the novitiate in Bonnelles in October 1952. His confreres were happy to see him again with his happy and easy going temperament. His formators emphasized his piety, simplicity and availability. He was therefore admitted to take his first oath, in April 1953, with the name 'Brother Henri-François', before being appointed to the Brothers' Training Center in Mours, where he was initiated into mechanics and carpentry. He gradually became known



as someone who, under a joyful, and at times a joking demeanor, proved to be a serious and profound man who could be relied upon. At the end of his novitiate, he was sent as a carpentry instructor to the novitiate of the brothers of Maison Carrée. He was transferred to Gap, in 1957, where he took a new temporary oath for three years.

It was then that he left for Ouahigouya where he was entrusted with the responsibility of the garage. On April 15, 1959, he pronounced his perpetual oath in Gilongou. Bishop Durrieu, finding a replacement for the garage, entrusted him with responsibility for Secours Catholique. He would later say that this period left him with the happiest of memories of his life: “We were pioneers in micro projects that enabled people to live better. There were many safaris in the villages on mopeds to visit families and explore with them the best ways out of poverty: boreholes, small farms, etc... I was very much in touch with what I expected from Africa, being in contact with the people...”

With fourteen years spent in Ouahigouya, Henri started feeling tired and somewhat bored. It was believed that it would be better to

offer him a change. The French Province having just opened a house for senior confreres in Bry-sur-Marne, he was asked to help set up the new house and to take responsibility for the Bursar’s office. Two years later, it was in Tassy that his services were needed to take care of the farm and especially the vineyard, with Brother Denis. The years passed and, in 1981, Henri grew impatient and told the superiors: “I got involved in a society that was active, and they made me live like a monk. I live with the White Fathers; but what is their age and mentality?”

They understood that it was time for a new beginning. The bishop of N’Zerekore had asked for personnel, and so Henri went to Guinea for a return to Africa in July 1982. He quickly realized that things were difficult: he first had to spend five weeks in Conakry to sort out his papers and his residence permit. Once in N’Zerekore, he discovered that the conditions were precarious. Things were very poorly organized and there were only 5 priests in the diocese. In addition, the bishop was not enthusiastic at the prospect of the return of the White Fathers who had been expelled by Sékou Touré. He would rather have brothers to take care of the garage, the



carpentry and the brickyard. Two years later and Henri was still living with Swiss volunteers, but was still missing being in a White Fathers community. Living and working conditions became difficult. The Society being unable to find companions to join him, he was appointed to Mali, where after a few months in Bamako, he accepted to take charge of the bursary at Saint Augustine's Major Seminary. In 1988, a malignant stomach tumor took him back to France where he had to follow radiotherapy treatment. He then spent some time in Bry, and then in Angers. He did the retreat session in Jerusalem and left once again for the Major Seminary of Saint Augustine.

But he quickly became tired and would stay there for only a year before returning to France for good to be followed by the cancer specialist.

It was during this illness that he had a spiritual experience that he recounted in it in these terms "It was evening in the chapel in rue Friant. A voice told me that the last sentence of Matthew's Gospel was also for me: I am with you each day until the end of time. And

immediately the profound distress I felt was gone. Since then, I live every day with this word; Christ is always present with me." This experience would accompany him during the years that followed: first a dozen or so years in Mours, as a nurse, then in Bry-sur-Marne for the time of retirement. This experience in 1988 gave him the serenity that everyone admired until his last days. No matter what health problems he had to face, he showed no signs of worry, he was always available when asked for a service. Despite been hospitalized several times, he never complained, claiming that it was normal, and maintaining a friendly smile towards everyone. He was aware that the Lord was with him, and that gave meaning to his life.

On March 29, 2020, he was found dead in his room, entering peacefully and discreetly into the eternal shalom. The discipline imposed by the covid-19 pandemic made it impossible to celebrate his passage to the Kingdom in the community; it was in solitude that he was buried in the space reserved for the White Fathers at the Bry-sur-Marne cemetery.

France Sector Secretariat

Joannes Lioger

1936 - 2020



Joannès was born on January 4, 1936 in Aurec-sur-Loire, about twenty kilometers from St Etienne, in France. He was the eighth and last child of Matthieu and Marie Liogier who were small farmers, and with whom he grew up in a deeply Christian environment. During his years as a young boy, he was often brought to work on his parents' farm. On completion of his education at the village elementary school, he did his secondary studies at the diocesan minor seminary of Yssyngueux, where he was appreciated by both teachers and fellow students. The White Fathers were well known in his region

which had witnessed the blossoming of many missionary vocations. He would later confide that it was Father Antoine Paulin who gave him the White Fathers' virus.

In 1955, he was admitted to Kerlois where he studied philosophy for two years. In 1957, he moved to Gap, where the novitiate Sainte Marie, which had been moved from Algiers that year, had just been established. Joannès, at first shy and a little withdrawn, slowly matured and blossomed. Beneath his smile, one would discover his sensitivity, his simplicity and his generosity. Joannès was active and willing to do his share of manual work and loved sports, especially soccer. He asked to leave the French milieu and was sent to Totteridge where he did his first year of theology, before being incorporated at Fontainebleau and then sent to do the rest of his military service in Algeria. This was during the War of Independence, when the O.A.S. (Organisation Armée Secrète) began spreading terrorism. He was in Constantine where the atmosphere was tense, with more than forty soldiers victims of attacks in the streets of the city. The service lasted



24 months and Joannès found it long but was pleased to return to Totteridge to complete his formation. He was not a man who sought to be noticed, but he gave himself generously to his studies and to the various aspects in scholasticate in general. His superior presented him for the Oath as “a good subject who will become a good and zealous missionary. He took his Oath on June 26, 1963, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 27, 1964, at the Cathedral of Le Puy.

He was appointed to Oyo, Nigeria, where he arrived at the end of 1964. He immediately began to study Yoruba, which not all confreres could master, because it remained a language with tones. But thanks to his musical ear, Joannès succeeded quite well. He first became curate at Iseyin and Oyo, then Parish Priest for Iseyin, Iganna, Ota, Aiyegbaju, Olorunredo, and Iwere. These numerous assignments demonstrated his availability and his expertise. His zeal and good relations with all were indeed underlined. He devoted himself to the Xaveri movement and wrote a Yoruba catechism. He worked closely with the catechists and his practical sense was put to good use in the construction of missions and churches. He loved the people and his work. But the political situation, banditry and general inse-

curity weighed on him and tired him out.

After about thirty years interspersed with home leaves, a few refresher courses and a short year of mission animation service in Lille, Joannès felt that he was ripe for a new experience. In 1995, the Society decided to leave the diocese of Oyo which had enough priests. There were plans to open a community in northern Nigeria, in a Hausa and Muslim environment. Joannès volunteered and actively prepared for this by making observation tours. However, the project was abandoned and Joannès had to prepare himself for a new missionary insertion.

After a sabbatical year at the Institut de Formation humaine intégrale de Montréal, he volunteered to work in Niger. At the age of 62, he had to learn a new language, Hausa. He found himself in a foreign land in a country that was 99% Muslim. The Christian community in Zinder was composed of about twenty Beninese families, six Sisters of the Assumption and three Sisters of Cluny. “That was about one religious for every nine parishioners! So we had a lot of time to take care of the Muslims: the lepers, the street children, the HIV-positive, and the distribution of tons and tons of millet in the villages”. After all the



years he spent in flourishing and dynamic Christian communities in southern Nigeria, he had to adapt to this new missionary environment and enter into “the apostolate of presence, a bit like Father de Foucauld, which requires one to adjust to the situation”. This in fact demanded a true conversion, which he did with good heart, enthusiasm and generosity.

In 2007, he was over 70 years old and decided to return to France. He was operated on for a cancerous tumor in his right ear and joined the community of Ste Foy where he was entrusted with the bursar’s office. He worked a lot in the garden; it was his passion from his rural origins. He improved the watering system, took care of the trees and planted apple trees in the garden. Although of a very discreet nature, he remained very faithful to community life: prayer in common, animation of the liturgy... He did some ministry in a home for elderly people and in a community of religious sisters.

In 2015, he was appointed to Mours. Once again, his gifts were put to good use for gardening and for all sorts of small jobs and personal initiatives. Thus, for example, each year he built a crib entirely made by him, with figures and an-

imals sculpted by him. He was a man of prayer, faithful to morning meditation and services, and took great care in the preparation of liturgies, where his gift for singing was highly appreciated. A rather solitary and silent type, he was really lively only when commenting on soccer matches. Gradually, his age advanced and he was often seen wandering around the house or the park, lost in his thoughts, looking infinitely sad.

The last few months, we felt that something (perhaps his health) was bothering him. He often complained that he was very tired. From January onwards, his health deteriorated; he had to be hospitalized in several clinics and hospitals. Finally he passed away at the Conti clinic near Mours. It was a sad and lonely end of life, far from his confreres. The confinement due to Covid-19 not only prohibited him from being visited, but even from having his remains brought into the house. His confreres celebrated the funeral Mass, before gathering for a short celebration around his coffin, at the foot of the statue of the Virgin Mary, at the entrance to the house. Only a few confreres were able to accompany him to the cemetery in Beaumont-sur-Oise for a last farewell.

France Sector Secretariat



Anton Weidelener

1934 - 2020



Anton was born on September 21, 1934 in Biberach on the Riss, he was the first born son and child. Anton had a difficult early childhood and his years of adolescence were of a diverse nature. His father was a policeman so the family had to move frequently because of his career. In 1943, he was transferred to Birnbaum in the Warthergau, now Poland.

His father was completely caught up in the ideology of the time and forbade all religious practice in the

family. His second younger sister was secretly baptized by a Polish priest. Sunday Mass and prayer were no longer on the agenda.

In January 1945, the family had to flee from the Russian army. In Mosburg/Buchau they found refuge with the paternal grandmother until 1949. In Mosburg, Anton attended elementary school until 1947 and then a year of high school in Buchau. His mother and grandmother were deeply religious and kept the faith alive in the family; they were great role models for his priestly and missionary vocation.

Through regular and close contact with Fr. Fridolin Rauscher, Anton attended the junior seminary of the White Fathers in Haigerloch in 1948 and then in Grosskrotzenburg, where he took the state examination in 1955. His father wanted him to continue his studies at the university. Anton, however, had his goal set before his eyes: he wanted to become a white father. For this he enrolled for the philosophy studies in Trier. This decision had always troubled his relationship with his father. After the novitiate



in Gap, France, Anton studied theology in Carthage, Tunisia from 1958 to 1961. His father agreed to his son's professional option and attended his ordination to the Deaconate. His priestly ordination took place in Aalen on July 17, 1961.

Appointments in Germany, then in Burkina Faso

The first appointment of Anton was for missionary animation in Haigerloch. Half a year later, he went to München to revive the enthusiasm for mission awareness in the schools of the deaneries of Upper Bavaria in the context of PMK-Aachen (Papal Missionary Childhood), a ministry rich in blessings. In 1965, he finally got his appointment for Burkina Faso (Upper Volta). After the three-month pastoral course in Mours, France, he left by boat with a VW-bus from Marseille for West Africa. He had put his future life under the protection of the Mother of God (ND de la Garde) as the Cardinal had done.

He was appointed to the Diocese of Koupela. In Guiloungou, he followed a six-month language course in Moore, the language of the Mossis. His first pastoral experience was as a curate of the cathedral of Koupela. After three years he became parish priest. In 1972, the

bishop appointed a diocesan priest as parish priest of the Cathedral. Anton took advantage of this change for his first home leave in Germany, and then he went to Abidjan for a year at the CSTR (now ICAO). His final work was entitled: Morality and marriage customs of the Mossi people.

Back in Koupela he was in charge of the parish of Pouytenga. It was a time of great blessings in the parish's pastoral ministry. He always spoke of a Pentecostal Spring.

In 1979, this blessed time came to an abrupt end for Toni. From direct pastoral care, he moved into development pastoral care at the BEL (Bureau d'Etudes et de Liaison) in Ouagadougou. With Dieudonné Hien, director of the office, he was part of an office that set a lot of things in motion and was an inspiration to a lot of people. Relations with the bishops were unfortunately uneasy, especially with Cardinal Zoungrana.

With grants, especially from MISEREOR, projects for the development of the country were implemented, while the bishops were hoping instead for support for pastoral projects. When Weidelener received the Medal of Merit from the Sankara government for his



work and the German ambassador presented him with the Federal Cross of Merit, tensions with Cardinal Zoungana became so high that he had to pull out of the BEL. For the ecclesiastical hierarchy, it was unacceptable that a White Father could have a medal of merit attached to his religious habit by a civil government for the work he performed that was mandated by God and the Church.

In 1987 Father Toni Weideler took a second leave of absence and followed the Bible course in Jerusalem with the 30-day retreat. He returned to Burkina Faso in 1988 after a good rest. The provincial asked him to begin vocational animation for the White Fathers there. It was a difficult time for him because this activity was not well regarded by some bishops.

Provincial in Germany

From 1992 to 1997, Father Weideler was provincial in Germany. Later he would say that this difficult but equally challenging period was the most difficult of his life. After so many years in Africa, the change of mentality in the situation of a secular society in Germany was not easy. Nevertheless, for several institutions, such as the Conference of Religious Congregations, the

German Council of Catholic Missions, the Steering Committee of VDO, the Working Conference for the Universal Church, especially at MISSIO and the MISEREOR Council, his advice and his comprehensive views were valued and sought after.

His work as spiritual advisor to AGEH (Working Committee for Development Aid) was dear to his heart. In the organization of intensive courses for outgoing development aid workers, he tackled the theme: "Understanding mission today". In addition, important decisions had to be taken in the province: inauguration of the "Afrika-Center" in Berlin, despite the increasingly serious reduction in personnel; restoration of the houses in Haigerloch, Hörstel and Trier to be transformed to the advantage of the confreres. He later regretted that he had to hand over to the Bishops' Conference the responsibility for the CIBEDO Institute (Christlich-Islamische Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle: Institute of encounter and documentarian Islamo-Christian) following the advice of the Generalate. Thus the province lost an important platform for encounter with Muslims and intercultural dialogue.



The return to Africa and then to Germany

Upon his return to Africa in 1998, Father Weideler became parish priest of the John XXIII parish abandoned by the Jesuits. With Fathers José Sarasola and Pierre Meynet, he formed a dynamic team to take a new direction: a parish center with a parish priest, church and social institutions were erected in the then parish on the outskirts of the capital. In 2006, the bishop blessed the church. This great project was realized thanks to enormous financial help from the fathers' countries of origin. In the name of the community and the helpers, Toni Weideler received the order of "Knight of the National Order" from the hand of President Blaise Compaore at the presidential palace in 2008. In order to hand over the renewed pastoral care to younger priests, he would have gladly agreed to leave Burkina Faso and return to Germany. However, he had to wait a year, because the superiors asked him to take

over the vacant management of the "Pelican" Youth Center and to restore order there: More attention was given to computer courses; three libraries could be accessed; there was above all enough room for studies that most people were unable to do at home.

Unfortunately, health problems also occurred. Accompanied by a colleague, Toni returned to Germany in 2008. Thanks to an emergency operation, his health was quickly restored so that he could take over the leadership of the community in Cologne. On his 80th birthday, a desire was fulfilled: he could bid farewell to the city of domes and take his place as an elder in München with many frailties. He was transferred to the "Augustinum" hospital after falling in his room. There he put his life and all that he had achieved back into the hands of his creator, his life having been dedicated entirely to the proclamation of the Good News and its implications for social outreach.

Günther Zahn



Aloys Reiles

1932 - 2020



Born in Pétange, Luxembourg, on the 19th January 1932, Father Aloys Reiles died on the 21 June 2020 in the hospital in Luxembourg, after 66 years of missionary life in Great Britain, Uganda and Luxembourg. Here below, is the profile he wrote himself.

My enthusiasm for mission and for my vocation was the result of my activities for the missions in my home parish in Pétange. Our Parish Priest was J.-P. Belche. Our

activities, for example, meetings, conferences and bazaars for the missions, were not limited to our parish. We organized exhibitions for the missions throughout the country. Excursions to Marienthal, Clairfontaine, Differdange, etc., where we could come into contact with missionaries were also organized.

The fact that I later decided to join the White Fathers had, I believe, something to do with my preference for Africa. Being the only boy among three girls I was forced to play with dolls. And my doll was a black doll. Several years later I moved to Switzerland, because of the low standard of the school. I ended up in "l'institut Lavigerie" in Saint-Maurice where I attended college. In Fribourg, I passed the state exam and studied philosophy. My dream for Africa became more and more concrete. I then decided to join the missionaries of Africa. This decision led me to the novitiate in Heerenberg, Holland, where I began the study of theology, which I finished in London. I took my missionary oath in Totteridge in 1958 and was ordained a priest in Heverle on February 2, 1959.



Before ordination to the priesthood, we were asked where we wanted to be appointed. My answer was: ‘somewhere, but if possible in the bush in Sub Saharan Africa. To my surprise, my first appointment was to teach in a minor seminary. For the next 12 years I would be teaching general sciences, i.e. biology, physics and chemistry, which I had never really dreamt of. After a short time it became clear to me, however, that the formation of future priests was one of the most important priorities of the White Fathers. Collaborating in building the local church and bringing it towards self-reliance was, as I found afterwards, very satisfying.

I enjoyed my work and the almost weekly excursions to the nearby Lake Nabugabo with my VW-Beetle and 7 or 8 young passengers; I kept very happy memories of them. When I was appointed bursar a few years later, I had the opportunity of being in contact with the hard-working staff and thus improving my language skills in Luganda. Remaining a secondary school teacher for life would have seemed a bit too monotonous to me.

After being in a closed type of environment for 12 years, I was able to be outdoors in the bush, and again to the Ssesse Islands in Lake

Victoria where I would catch not only men, of course, but also fish to feed in the coming years. Along with the missionary zeal, visiting and animating the Christian communities on different small islands with our 5 m long canoe had something to do with my desire for adventure. I sometimes underestimated the dangers of this large lake surrounded by land (the size of the Benelux countries). Some fishermen exaggerated the safety of their boats there and lost their lives. “Lord save us” was sometimes a spontaneous prayer.

This was during the time of the dictator Idi Amin. Already at the end of 1972, about 70,000 Indians were expelled from the country. Work permits were also withdrawn, or not renewed, for our missionary personnel. This happened to my Belgian confrere; I was left alone in the parish, against the community rule of the White Fathers. So I had to return to the mainland, after 5 years on these paradise-like islands, in the hinterland of Buganda, on the border with Ankole, where I could collaborate in a new foundation. Here too I was happy, because I had wished to go to the bush and I did.

One main pastoral occupation was visiting homes, that is, looking for Christians in remote villages and



founding new outstations. Many of these were immigrants from the abandoned areas of Ankole and Kigezi. I had the opportunity to learn the basics of their language. That was when we were trying to transmit to them the pastoral guidelines of the East African Bishops' Conference: the small Christian basic communities, the church from the grass-roots level. These communities in the villages met weekly to exchange on a text of the Gospel and to translate it into their daily life. This was possible thanks to trained catechists and group leaders.

The year 1982 marked the end of my rural experience with my election as Vice-Provincial. In addition to the work of administration - there were still 130 White Fathers at that time - we were obliged to visit all the confreres in order to address personal problems as well as those of the community. Politically, it was not an interesting time for me.

This was the second term of Mr. Obote, who came to power through electoral manipulation, a time of insecurity, because J. Museveni, the current president, with his liberation warriors and guerrilla tactics had declared war on him. In the meantime, the country's army had become uncontrollable; as is often the case,

it was the ordinary people who suffered the most.

The cause of my heart attack was different. But perhaps this was a contributing factor. I had my first heart attack on January 1. I had basically said goodbye to this life, but somehow I survived. In the fall of 1985, I was advised to try a job for a few years in my country. After 25 years in Africa, I needed a clear change to adapt to the mentality of Europe. Being a collaborator with MISSIO and later parish administrator in Ma-mer, I had the opportunity to serve as a link between my homeland and the mission church.

After a Bible session at Saint Anne in Jerusalem and climbing Mount Sinai. I was allowed to return to the "pearl of Africa"; this time it was in a newly founded parish in the city, Kampala. There I managed to work until the second heart attack in the autumn of 2002. As in any large city, a minority of the privileged (members of the government, civil servants, businessmen) rubbed shoulders with a majority of the poor who had not managed in any way to rise to the utopian rank of the rich. They tried to survive somehow through all kinds of small businesses, often in poor neighborhoods where they were on the margins of the



subsistence level. However, we had a lot of contact with them.

Intercultural encounters were interesting in the life of city dwellers, since practically all ethnic groups, with their different languages, were represented. Our Catholic Teachers' Association, for example, was one example: teachers were employed all over the country. After a short time, I became aware of the HIV/AIDS patients and their problems. By the end of the eighties, a number of well-known people declared their illness openly, which helped to remove the taboo on the subject. Together with our youth groups, we organized Behavior Change Sessions. Different support groups were created, e.g. Taso, Youth alive, Phyl Luta, a well-known pop singer, etc. All of these groups were working together to work on informing and propagating positive thinking in the country's state, churches and media. Eventually, our parish founded the "St. Matias-Mulumba-Foundation" to support many of the affected communities. Each family had one AIDS patient and one deceased person in the family. We encouraged and supported mini-projects for self-sufficiency, medical care, and medical support for orphans, 1/3 of whom were infected with HIV at birth.

Our parish, St. Matias Mulumba, was erected in 1984 on the spot where Matias, one of the martyrs of Uganda, was tortured to death. Every year on June 3, thousands of Christians undertake the pilgrimage to Namugongo, where Pope Paul VI consecrated the Basilica of the Martyrs in 1969. Many of these pilgrims come to our parish and spend the night there, celebrate Mass and set out for 15 km journey early in the morning. In 2002, our parish, St. Matias Mulumba, was handed over to the diocesan clergy. I had made a plan to devote myself now entirely to the fight against AIDS and to the care of the sick. Unfortunately, this would not come to pass. In August I suffered another heart attack and was exiled to Europe at the end of 2002 after a long stay in hospital.

My hope of returning to Uganda again evaporated after a year as my health had not necessarily improved. You become more reasonable if you have escaped death twice. "Jesus had said to Peter, 'You shall stretch out your hands and another shall lead you'" (John 21:18). Now I try to care for the elderly and the sick. In 2009, I was able to celebrate my golden jubilee of priesthood and I am very grateful to God for that: I was able to live 40 years in Africa; it was a special gift that made me



happy, either as a professor, or as a priest in the bush, or as a parish priest in the city. Even today, I feel happy at the civil hospice in Pfaffenthal for being able to accompany

and encourage elderly and sick people on their journey.

Aloys himself

From his personal account of his missionary life.

Entirely dedicated to God's providence and will, Aloys had seen his strength diminish in recent months. After a short stay in hospital, he fell asleep peacefully on June 21, 2020.

Writing your personal obituary?

Since I became the editor of the *Petit Écho* in October 2015, this is the first time I have “officially” published an obituary signed by the confrere himself. In fact, a long-established practice exists in certain sectors of our Society where confreres are asked to write about their missionary experiences. It is on the basis of all this information that their obituary notices are elaborated and presented to the editorial staff of the *Petit Écho*.

It is not always easy to speak “seriously” about oneself, for fear of saying little or too much. In all fairness, it is also true that the only person capable of saying exactly how they experienced a particular event is oneself. It is often entrusted to confreres of good will to write obituaries of deceased confreres whom they may not have known well; fortunately, thanks to the biographical records kept at the General Secretariat, we are able to retrace the missionary journey of a confrere, his various appointments, and the salient events of his life.

Personally, I would not encourage a confrere to sign his own obituary, simply because I deeply believe that we should be able to give testimonies to one another, despite our human limitations; but I would strongly encourage confreres to write down their missionary experiences to reflect the impact of God in their journey in his service. This will not be an exercise in self-glorification, but a testimony for the greater glory of God, one intended to enlighten, and why not interest future generations. All this is part of our history.

Freddy Kyombo

Siegfried Elbert

1938 - 2020



Siegfried was born on February 25, 1938, third son and fourth child of his parents Sebastian and Luzia Elbert in Aschaffenburg. His father was a factory worker and his mother also supported the household with work as a seamstress. The war and post-war years passed relatively well for him, without any major difficulties. His father was not called up to war but he lived occasionally separated from his family. In spite of this, the parents ensured for their four children a worry-free youth. Two brothers and one sister were older than him; both brothers were called up for military service, but returned from Captivity as early as 1945. Unfortunately, the

youngest died in 1947, at the age of 27, as a result of his war wounds.

Elbert was a calm and physically very strong man. Since he had no siblings of the same age, he began attending the youth movement in his parish at a very early age and was active until he joined the White Fathers. At the Aschaffenburg high school, he obtained the middle school-leaving certificate. It was then that he made the decision to become a priest and missionary and joined the White Fathers' high school in Grosskrotzenburg. In French, Latin and Greek, he needed to catch up on a good part of the lessons to be able to master the new language. Older students gave him special lessons. He showed that he had the necessary intelligence and strength of character. He moved onto the "Untersecunda" class level relatively quickly and then joined the regular classes. In his conduct he is very attentive and polite. He never put himself in the spotlight, but was active in theatrical presentations; he took care of the flower garden with his know-how and with joy. In 1959 he passed the final graduation examination. His formation then continued in the traditional formation program of the White Fathers of that time: study of philosophy in Trier, novitiate in Hörstel,



scholasticate in Totteridge. On February 1, 1965 he took his missionary oath in Totteridge and was ordained priest on July 3 of the same year in Horb, with six other companions from the same course.

Appointments in Ghana and Germany

His first appointment in Africa took him to Ghana in 1966 to the Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga. He was a well-liked pastor in the parish of Serigu. After his first leave of absence, Father Loyo from Dillingen was happy to take him on as a missionary for promotion activities, which suited his character and temperament well. Within three years, he came to love Dillingen. But his passion took him back to Navrongo again. There, a job of great responsibility was waiting for him. His former parish priest, Father Ankanlu, who has now become bishop of the diocese, wanted to take him on as his secretary, valuing him and knowing that he would be available and efficient in his work. Siegfried carried out this task for six years until 1982, when an illness forced him to return to Germany.

The appointment in Dillingen, the progress of his illness and the cordial reception in the local community minimized his disappointment at having to leave Africa forever. Together with Father Loyo, he carried out his pastoral work. Father Loyo valued this confrere for his fidelity, his prudence and his au-

thentic missionary attitude. He saw in him great abilities in the areas of exegesis, Christian formation and catechesis by means of study and documentation. Siegfried also needed an activity that would stimulate him and where he could realize his dream of dialogue between Africa and Germany.

In a neighboring parish in Dillingen, he accepted the position of parish administrator. He used his experience in Ghana in the preparation for confirmation, First Communion and other parish festivities.

In October 1991, he was appointed parish priest of the parish of St. Leodegar in Dueppenweiler, where he did a good job thanks to his great commitment and good contact with the parishioners and local associations. In his personal and original way, he was a confidant and esteemed by all, including those who did not attend church. At the age of 75, he handed in his resignation, which was accepted on May 31, 2014. On Corpus Christi in 2014, a parish feast day, he left the parish and began a well-deserved rest after 50 years of priesthood, 23 of which were spent in Dueppenweiler.

Father Siegfried Elbert died in the hospital of Saarlouis on January 24, 2020, after a serious operation on his biliary tract. He found his final resting place in the parish of Dueppenweiler, which he loved so much.

Günther Zahn



Missionaries of Africa

Brother Jean-Bernard Delannoy, of the Diocese of Lille, France. He died in Mours, France, on the 29th July 2020, at the age of 74 years of which 53 years of missionary in Mali and France.

Brother Ledeul René, of the Diocese of Laval, France. He died in Billère, France, on the 19th August 2020 at the age of 85 years of which 65 years of missionary in Algeria and Burkina Faso.

Father Büth Wolfgang, of the Diocese of Paderborn, Germany. He died in Cologne, Germany, on the 20th August 2020, at the age of 82 years of which 55 years of missionary in Tanzania and Germany.

Father Gruffat Maurice, of the Diocese of Annecy, France. He died in Billère, France, on the 21st August 2020, at the age of 93 years of which 68 years of missionary in Zambia and France.

Father Jean Chardin, of the Diocese of Nancy France. He died in Yamousoukro, Ivory Coast, on the 26th August 2020 at the age of 95 years of which 70 years of missionary in Liban, Mali, France and Ivory Coast.

Father Gotthard Rosner, of the diocese of Rottenburg, Germany. He died in Munich, Germany, on the 2nd September 2020 at the age of 79 years, of which 53 years of missionary life in Uganda, Switzerland, France, Italy, USA, UK and Germany.

Father Bernhard Pehle, of the diocese of Paderborn, Germany. He died in Oelde, Germany, on the 1st September 2020 at the age of 81 years, of which 53 years of missionary life in Zambia and Germany.

Father Robert Nicolas, of the diocese of Bayonne, France. He died in Pau-Billère, France, on the 20th of September 2020 at the age of 91 years, of which 67 years of missionary life in Mali and France.

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

Sister Henriette Eppink (Marie Bosco). She died in Boxtel, Netherlands, on the 25th July 2020 at the age of 93 years of which 72 years of missionary in Burkina Faso, Mali and Netherlands.

Sister Madeleine Lacoursière (Marie Immaculée). She died in Montréal, Canada, on the 28th July 2020, at the age of 93 years of which 71 years of missionary in Ouganda, United States and Canada.

Sister Jane Doyle (Michael Mary). She died on the 20th August 2020, at the age of 87 years of which 60 years of missionary in Kenya and United Kingdom.

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