

# PETIT ECHO

2020 / 10

1116



MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA



SINCE DECEMBER 1912

## PETIT ECHO

Society of the  
Missionaries of Africa

2020 / 10 n° 1116

10 ISSUES YEARLY

PUBLISHED BY

THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE SOCIETY

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Finito di stampare novembre 2020

## EDITOR'S WORD

In this year's last issue, we deal with the theme: "Our common home (integrity of creation): what is my share of responsibility?"

"LAUDATO SI'", Pope Francis' encyclical, has awakened the Church and the world to the ecological question in all its dimensions. The encyclical has made it a question of faith, a spiritual, moral, anthropological, environmental question and even a path through which a Christian can "glorify God". In how far are we, M.Afr. and MSOLA, concerned by this question which is linked to our charism in its dimensions of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation as well as Encounter and Dialogue?

We, the editorial team of the Petit Echo, thank all the brothers and sisters who throughout this year have shared with us their experience through very inspiring articles. We also thank all our readers. We encourage all of you to always be ready to "give an account of the Mission" and to witness to Christ through the articles you send to the Petit Écho, sharing the choices you make, your activities and initiatives in the field.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2021.

Freddy Kyombo

## Cover

Artisanal gold mines in Mali

PHOTO PAWEŁ HULECKI

## David Attenborough

*"The only way to save a rhino is to save the environment in which it lives, because there is a mutual dependence between it and millions of other species of animals and plants".*

## A “Rainbow” World

My years of theology in Totteridge, from 1991 to 1995, coincided with the events leading up to the great day of 27th April 1994, better known as ‘Freedom Day’, when South Africa’s first democratic elections in the post-apartheid era took place. This memorable day showed that the dream of so many men and women respectful of human rights around the world could indeed be realized. In the months leading up to this great day, a much-used expression resounded in my heart. Mandela spoke of “rainbow nation”, the rainbow nation, referring to the need to live together regardless of race, culture, language. And to echo this, it was also eloquent to see how the colors of the flags of the ANC and of the pre-1994 Republic of South Africa had been harmoniously arranged to create a new flag that would usher in a new stage in the history of the South African nation proud of its diversity.



More than twenty years later, in 2015, I found myself at home in Quebec, in Montreal, at our Afrika Centre. It didn’t take me long to discover how, there too, in downtown Montreal, the colors of the rainbow were also being honored. These colors, in the North American context today, are the prerogative of the LGBT movement, LGBTQ2S or LGBTQIA, different acronyms reminding us of the different possibilities of

**Martin Grenier**  
Assistant General





## FOREWORD

sexual orientation other than that of being heterosexual. This movement carries some influence in North America. The church in our neighborhood had a particular mission to reach out to and welcome members of this community. At the Afrika Centre, with our mission to be present among the various African communities in Montreal, it happened at times that the Arc-en-ciel d'Afrique group, working with LGBT communities of African and Caribbean origin, would use our hall for their meetings.

What else can we say about the rainbow as a symbol? The biblical image of Noah coming out of the ark with his family and all the animals comes to mind. In the book of Genesis 9:12-13 we read that God says:



“This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and all the living creatures that are with you, for the generations to come: I will put my bow in the cloud and it shall become a sign of a covenant between me and the earth”.

A sign of the covenant between God and the earth? Indeed, a complete rainbow shows this well standing at two points of the horizon and reaching out towards “Our Father in heaven”. A covenant, not only with human beings, but with all living beings and the earth! There is wisdom in these biblical words that remind us that human beings, animals and the earth are one community, that we all share a common home, as Pope Francis says so well. It is important to realize that all of us, God’s creatures, are part of the same whole, that everything is linked to it. We are members of the same body, so that the joy or sorrow of a few soon affects the whole body.

In Genesis, the myth of the flood is presented to us as a punishment from God who regretted having made man whose wickedness was out of control. Have we the right to say the same today, to attribute every natural disaster to divine retribution? Certainly not! Still, God continues to speak to us, often through happy or tragic events that invite us to listen or to “examine the signs of the times” and interpret them in the light of



the Gospel. Thus, the present pandemic is clearly a call to question ourselves, to seek and “rediscover simpler and more sustainable lifestyles” (Pope Francis, Message for World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, Sept. 2020).

This edition of the Petit Echo looks at this concern, or rather the responsibility of taking care of our common home. The various articles succinctly present, among others, the writings of Pope Francis on this theme, more particularly “Laudato si” which, last May, marked the 5th anniversary of its publication, and still raises several key questions. It also calls for a spirited response to Pope Francis’ invitation, via the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Development, to begin a seven-year “Laudato si” journey towards integral ecology. Several other articles give us concrete suggestions on how to implement this commitment and, as a result, invite us not only to compete creatively to be involved, but above all to share with each and every one our own initiatives in order to stimulate others.

To conclude, may the hymn of the universe (Daniel, chapter 3) always be for us a reminder that, with humanity, the whole of creation is called to bless the Lord and to confess, “To him be highest glory and praise forever!”

Martin Grenier, Assistant General

*All the works of the Lord, Bless the Lord!  
To him high glory, eternal praise!*





**“If the Lord wishes,  
we will live  
and do this or that.”  
Jas 4:15**

**Best  
Wishes**



As we approach the end of the year, I wish that we may all harvest the graces received. They are the stepping-stones to live our faith better and to grow in our vocation in the New Year.

### **Taking a look back on an unusual year**

The year 2020 will never be forgotten for reasons that no one ignores. As people presented their best wishes for the New Year, many expressed the wish that 2020 be the year of summa cum laude, of 20/20! But we did not get very far before the Coronavirus took over the entire planet in the very first months, declaring an almost total lockdown that brought many activities to a halt. Quickly, 2020 became the year in which we



were going for a long time to experience times marked by great fear and insecurity. Far from being the year of *summa cum laude*, 2020 was felt as a year of the great failure of the systems on which our world has been built.

As Pope Francis writes in *Fratelli Tutti*, the Coronavirus pandemic has “exposed our false securities”; it has thwarted our plans and projections. Many of us found ourselves stranded, away from our ‘bases’ for months, wondering whether and when it would be possible to return. Not only did we have to cancel many of our planned meetings and visits, but it also became difficult to foresee and plan for the future. Our era has not known such fragility for a long time. This is naturally frightening.

### **Recovering the hope that makes us Christians**

The situation we are going through is preoccupying. It is not without raising serious questions even at the level of faith. As someone remarked, theologians have gone silent on this one! It is with great uncertainty that we went through the long periods of confinement. Our Society as well as some of our families has been badly affected by the pandemic. With gratitude for what they brought to the missionary work of the Church, we will always remember those of our confreres who went before us because of Covid-19. But in our hearts there is a certain feeling of melancholy, a discreet but real sadness.

The world is dreaming of better times when it will recover from suffering and uncertainty. Together, let us continue to entrust this desire to God, asking him to bless and protect our efforts. The feast of Christmas invites us to welcome God who comes to awaken in us the hope that only He can give. Indeed, hope is what the world needs most in this moment of uncertainty, of fear and questioning. Hope is also the greatest gift we can offer the world as Christians. For us, hope is theological, that is, it refers directly to God. It is because of that, that Saint Paul can say with conviction that hope does not deceive (Rom 5:5). Wherever we are in our encounters with others, for each one of us our mission is above all to be “sowers of hope”.



## GENERAL COUNCIL







## Drawing out the good from sad circumstances

Despite the suffering and anxiety caused by the pandemic, the world was quick to commend some of the benefits associated with the measures put in place to contain it. For example, some people and institutions noted how clear and uncluttered the skies had become again because of the reduction in pollution following the suppression of flights for several months! In this sense, it would be beneficial to take the time to meditate on the reflections that Andreas Göpfert offers us in this edition and to welcome the invitation to evaluate our lifestyle launched by Pope Francis in the Encyclical Letter *Laudato sí*. Also, the fact of not being able to gather in churches for common celebrations of the sacraments during the confinement led some Christians to explore and favour other ways to meet God, though they understood very well that those ways do not replace the strength and joy of shared prayer. Families, but also our communities were able to spend more time together.

The sad circumstances of life never fail to awaken our attention to the good things we ignore. We need to integrate into our lives what we are rediscovering about life thanks to the pandemic. Here we have the Christian attitude to adopt in trying situations: That of searching for the meaning of events and discerning what message God is communicating to us through them. This is the Christian approach that Jesus invites us to adopt in the face of tragic situations, not seeking to judge or to condemn anyone. It is rather about becoming aware and listening to events as they unfold and call us to change our behaviour. This, among other things, is what we learn from the account, in the Gospel according to Luke, of the incident of the tower of Siloam which collapsed and killed eighteen people (see Lk 13:1-5).

Covid-19 reminds us only too well of our innate vulnerability, our mortality and our fragility! We are not as strong as we think, just as we do not master everything because not all things depend on us. We are invited to accept and live this reality more consciously. It also calls us to involve God who is always present to our lives, more and more in our decisions and plans, for that is what Scripture teaches when we read: "Instead you ought to say: If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that." (See Jas 4:13-15).



### Keeping the missionary flame alive in difficult times

Moving from one year to another in the uncertain context of the world today naturally nourishes in all of us hope for better times where we will bounce back into life. May we be inspired to be missionaries of the Good News in this time, bringing our contribution to the rebirth of a universal aspiration for a new world as we commit ourselves to promoting the dignity of every person and the safeguarding of integral ecology wherever we are, thanks to simple gestures that count. We pray that the year 2021 brings us blessings of peace, joy and good health. May we grow in fraternal love, reaching out to the different people God puts on our path as Pope Francis invites us to do in his latest encyclical letter, through encounter, an approach proper to missionaries of the Gospel.

Stanley Lubungo, Superior General

### Erratum

Dear readers, the editorial board points out an error that crept into Father Francis Nolan's article on page 533. Instead of writing "...millions of *unevangelised* farming people ..... abandoned", we mistakenly wrote: ".....millions of *evangelised* farming people..... abandoned".

The Editorial board



# In 2020: Working together in support of our common home, the Earth!



## **We cannot go on the way we are! Humanity is on the brink!**

Everyone, regardless of age, is increasingly aware of this critical phase of humanity that we are going through. In this anthropocentric era, the human factor in influencing and shaping the earth has become ever more real. The “human era “ is causing irreversible ecological and social crises on a local, regional and global scale. Its disastrous implications are visible, palpable and perceptible. Some researchers even say that “humanity is in the process of annihilating itself”.

A number of confrères have approached me to share their concerns about the ecological crisis. While some are becoming more informed and are being trained, others are becoming personally and concretely involved. During the 2016 Chapter, our Missionary Society expressed itself timidly on the importance of protecting the environment and promoting a Green Church.



However, the year 2020 is drawing to a close. There are excellent opportunities for us to take another positive step forward and march together, working more intensely for the respect and preservation of our common home, Mother Earth. Confronted with the cries of the earth, confronted with the cries of those suffering, there is growing sensitivity, receptiveness and compassion among its citizens. There is the motivation and the will to walk together, to be committed together, beyond national, religious and denominational borders. On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'* and the 50th anniversary of the Day of the Earth, activities have been organized, texts published, actions carried out and collaboration between various actors strengthened.

## Four key areas of action

At a diocesan meeting here in Rome, we were encouraged to play our roles as individuals without having to wait for big political decisions. Four key areas of action were particularly mentioned by a renowned meteorologist in Italy: building, transport, food and consumption.

-With regard to building, and I was pleased to hear this, because we already use thermal solar panels to heat the water in the house and, recently, we installed photovoltaic solar panels on our terraces in the Generalate, which produce electricity. Much to the delight of our local bursar, especially since the electricity bill has dropped considerably!

-In relation to transport, we were encouraged to make greater use of the train and public transport and to reduce the use of planes, because the emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from air travel are comparatively very high. We were also asked to calculate our personal carbon footprint over one year. You can, for example, go to [futureclimatique.org/micmac/simulationCarbone.php](http://futureclimatique.org/micmac/simulationCarbone.php).

-With regard to food, the meteorologist reminded us of the fact that animal husbandry, especially cattle farming, contributes heavily to greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture and animal husbandry are major contributors to deforestation. Corn and soya fields play their roles in the production of animal feed. Consequently, it is absolutely necessary to review our meat consumption. The less meat we eat, the healthier the planet and people will be: do we need to wait for certain diseases and doctor's prescriptions before changing our eating habits?



Kayes Region, Mali: The effects of desertification in the Sahel

-With respect to consumption, the call is for discernment. It is not enough to recycle what we buy, use and throw away. The main demand is to produce less waste: considering the durability of objects when purchasing them; reducing the use of plastic and paper; opting for reusable, non-disposable dishes. The list of options is long. It's up to everyone to do his part.

In the rapidly changing and increasingly complex world in which we live, it is not so easy to discern how we use things, because everything is interconnected. The consequences of “Streaming” and digital consumerism are already on the horizon. It's so easy to watch films and video clips on the smartphone anywhere, anytime: in the metro, at the bus stop, in the doctor's waiting room. Watching an online video on the small screen, following live football, all this seems futuristic for a part of the population of our globe, but the accessibility to this digital universe is developing at a galloping pace. The latest research already shows that this latest trend, “Streaming”, is considerably increasing emissions of CO<sup>2</sup>. Watch the following video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJn6pja\\_18s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJn6pja_18s).

### Changing our lifestyle

How do we take care of our mother, the Earth? This question is addressed to each of us individually, but also collectively. If you wish to





pursue this further, it is advisable and beneficial to carry out an Eco-diagnosis. Have a look for example at: [www.egliseverte.org/eco-diagnostic/](http://www.egliseverte.org/eco-diagnostic/)

The root of the problem, which is at the same time the solution, is in the manner or way of life, and the lifestyle of each human being. Reading and deepening this aspect in *Laudato Si'* (no. 203-208) would be enlightening.

Changing one's lifestyle is not so easy. I believe that each of us has had this experience in our own lives. Besides, it is not likely that we have been educated to become 'ecological citizens'. However, we are called upon to promote education for responsible ecological citizenship (LS No. 209-215) There is still a long way to go.

Personal, community and societal "ecological conversion" is indispensable. *Laudato Si'* n°216-221. The Pan-Amazonian Synod revisited this subject, and the message of peace of 1 January 2020 emphasised the need for "a new way of living in the common house, of being present to one another, each in his or her diversity, of celebrating and respecting the life received and shared, of being concerned about the conditions and models of society that favour the blossoming and stability of life in the future, of developing the common good of the whole human family" (no. 4).

## The year 2020 and beyond

The year 2020 has provided us with many opportunities to journey together and draw inspiration from the initiatives taken to integrate respect and preservation of the Common House into our daily missionary life.

The message for January 1, "World Day of Peace", invited us to begin the year's pilgrimage: "Peace, a way of hope: dialogue, reconciliation and ecological conversion. »

On May 24th, we celebrated the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, an opportunity to propose or participate in prayers, conferences and various activities.

From the 1st September, 'World Day of Prayer for the Safeguarding of the Common House', to 4th October, feast of St. Francis of Assisi,



## MISSION



Kyeshero, Goma: Our "Common House" can become a place of fulfilment

we were invited to live the 'Season of Creation'. It was a precious opportunity to work together with brothers and sisters of other Christian confessions.

Of course, it is not necessary to follow these specific events in order to live an ecological conversion. For the rest of the year and in the years to come it should be possible to promote integral ecology, to organize meetings for reflection and formation and to realize concrete actions. Why not begin already to foresee certain initiatives in our community, our parish, our formation institute, our specific center.

We can share our experiences with each other through our networks! The experience of one community can inspire others. Let's create a synergy between us! Let us help each other in our efforts!

May the year 2021 help us to take several steps together and, better still, several leaps forward in order to integrate respect and care for the environment into our Christian missionary life. May we be actively committed to preserving the environment for every creature, both for present and future generations through our lifestyle, environmental education and concrete actions carried out together with people of goodwill.

Andreas Göpfert

# A (fictitious) Meeting in a Community of Elderly Sisters in Germany



*(The names of the participants are fictitious!)*

We reflect today on our role in the Integrity of Creation. Each one of us was asked to look at the documents of the last Chapter and find words that inspire us in this area.

Sister Pessima: The Capitular Acts ask us to “commit ourselves to the Integrity of Creation”. But what can elderly Sisters do? For me, the time for these activities is over. Do you want me to join with my walking frame the schoolchildren who demonstrate every Friday? In the style of ‘grandmothers for future’? As for the way we live, we are living in a centre for elderly people. We don’t have much to say on the lifestyle here. Just think of all those electric lights that we have running day and night. What a waste of energy! Look, the plastic containers in which the catering service dispatches our meals. That represents heaps of waste made of plastic! There is no way we can do anything about it. It is no longer our responsibility. We can only pray.



## MISSION

Sister Informata: Praying is good, but it is not enough. I found a sentence that inspires me: “We are encouraged to learn more about the causes of climate change “. It is our duty to be well-informed. The Congregation regularly sends us documents about safeguarding creation. We find others in newspapers and magazines. Last year, a Missionary of Africa gave us a retreat on “Laudato sí”. I have since begun re-reading this encyclical and, I assure you, it is worth it! Besides, good information provides us with prayerful intentions.

Sister Réalis: For me, I was struck by another phrase: “We are more and more aware that our planet is being destroyed mainly by human activity”. I reflected on whether we too are destroying our Earth. We are certainly not doing it consciously. But aren’t we part of this society that exploits the planet, that produces and consumes more and more, that wastes energy, poisons the groundwater and buries atomic waste? Who is multiplying plastic waste and sending CO2 into the air, thereby constantly increasing global warming? So, unintentionally, we too are destroying the environment instead of protecting it. And we belong to that generation that young people blame for not thinking about future generations.



In Kyeshero, Goma, Father Otto Mayer, collecting rubbish polluting Lake Kivu



Sister Concréta: I was inspired by this invitation: “To take concrete decisions that affect our way of life”. I notice that many of us have already taken such decisions. We wear clothes that we have bought “second hand” or that have been given to us. In our times, few people mend their clothes or their socks, but we do. Before throwing away a watch or other device, we try to repair it. Some people no longer buy liquid soap because, when it is finished, you are left with a plastic container to throw away, while hard soap is wrapped in paper. Nowadays it is common practice for us to print on both sides or to reuse sheets printed on one side only. A few months ago we made hundreds of envelopes using the paper from old calendars for our Christmas mail. And I think we are all careful not to waste water and electricity in our own rooms. Earlier, Sister Pessima said that there is no way for us to intervene because we live in a centre for elderly people. I don’t quite agree with that. Instead of complaining about what we cannot do, we could concentrate on what we can do. For example, heating: Mrs. K. (our coordinator) explained to us that over 70% of the energy used in our house is used for heating. In my own room, I am entirely responsible for managing the use of the heater and I can save a lot of energy if I am careful. In spring and autumn, it is often enough to put on an extra pullover without opening the radiator. In winter, I avoid opening it too much. To ventilate my room, instead of opening it a little all the time, I open the window completely for a few minutes several times a day. I turn down the radiator even for a few minutes; otherwise I heat the outside of the house! And when I leave my room for a little while, I do the same. I confess that I sometimes forget.

Sister Flora: When we read in the Capitular Acts that our fourth apostolic orientation is “care for the environment”, we can, of course, think of everything you mentioned. However, I think of something else: I have a balcony in front of my room and have made a little garden there. It gives me work, but also gives me great joy. People who pass by admire the beauty of creation. Other Sisters have balconies and do as I do. They even grow tomatoes! One Sister has consciously chosen flowers that are favorable to the life of insects, especially bees.

Sister Pratiqva: Let us not forget what is stated on page 20 of our Acts: “Awareness has been raised among us ... yet there is still a lot of





Kyeshero, Goma: a gardener at work! The human hand has a visible impact

work to be done in this area”. Sister Concréta acknowledged that she sometimes forgets to turn down the heater when she leaves the room. She is not the only one who forgets. It is one of the limits that our age imposes on us. How often do I forget to turn off the light in the bathroom because the switch is outside! But poor memory is no excuse. Each time I become aware of my forgetfulness can become an opportunity to renew my resolution. I would also invite us to repeat some of the small initiatives we have already taken : the envelopes initiative has already been mentioned. Collecting the cigarette stubs thrown on the ground, which poison the underground water table so much, is an action to be taken up again and again. This action also raises the awareness of the people who see it. Yesterday, I read that the Internet requires as much energy as all the transport of the world together. If everyone who has an e-mail address deleted the e-mails they no longer need, it would save a lot of electricity. Each one a little bit, but there are billions of us! I believe that the secret of success in the field of caring for Creation is to believe that small steps are powerful.

Sr. Gisela Harth, Cologne

## But why love, respect, protect and defend nature?



The encyclical *Laudato si* since its release on 24 May 2015 has raised awareness and continues to do so. The future of the earth depends on our choices today. It is not, however, the first document of the Catholic Church to evoke the theme of ecology. But it does provide a new key to understanding ecology and gives a boost to ecologists and even awakens awareness of the responsibility to take care of the earth, known as “our common home”.

Before the encyclical was promulgated, a few figures had emerged, including women, the so-called ‘guardians of nature’. For instance, Wangari Maathai, Kenyan, the first African woman to receive a Nobel Peace Prize (2004) in the context of safeguarding creation. Yacouba Sawadogo, known as ‘the man who stopped the desert’, won the Alternative Nobel Prize in 2018 in Stockholm, having befriended nature in Burkina Faso. Little Greta Thunberg, in her desire to lead a new generation of environmental activists, is raising awareness among young people everywhere hoping that adults will listen to her warning call.

Is it love for the earth? Is it passion for it? Is it a preoccupation or a simple “showing off”? Why do we need to be concerned about the earth?



Circle of Kenieba, Mali: A green village during the rainy season

Why do we need to love, respect, protect and defend nature? What is our relationship with nature? Personally, when I hear the word “earth” what comes to my mind is the rite of the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday at the beginning of Lent; also the words that go with it: “Remember that you are dust and into dust you shall return”.

## Respect for nature

We must love, respect, protect and defend nature because, first of all, that is where we come from, where we live and where we shall return. God first made the earth before creating human beings, giving them a place to dwell. Man remains dependent on the earth, as Raymond Matand Makashing states in his work “Man and Nature”: “Man depends on nature, on air for breathing, on water for all his life, on plants and animals for food, on the bacteria in his stomach for the digestion of his food [...]. All living beings depend on the earth, since life was born from the earth and is integral to the earth” (R.M. MATAND, *L’homme et la nature. Perspectives africaines de l’écologie profonde*, p.269).

This dependence should make human beings aware of their responsibility to take care of nature. Destroying a forest means destroying with it all that it contains of its destiny as well as people’s destiny. To destroy



the earth is to destroy the human person who depends on it. To take care of the earth means not only taking care of humankind but also paying homage to the Creator.

The earth is a common dwelling place. The encyclical *Laudato si* speaks of “our common home” and uses this expression 13 times! The earth then refers not only to a physical reality, but also to a social and a spiritual unity. Our houses are made not only of bricks and mortar, but also and above all of the social relationships that exist between us humans and with the other elements of creation with which we share this earthly space. The encyclical speaks of “humanity as a people living in a common home” (LS’ 164). Just because it is common does not mean that everyone, in the name of individual or even collective power, may act on behalf of all. It is a matter of becoming increasingly aware that it is not possible to make use of the different categories of living or inanimate beings, plants and natural elements as one wishes, according to one’s economic and cultural needs: “I need four hectares of corn, so I cut down all the trees found there”. Rather, it is necessary to take into account the nature of each species and its mutual connection with the other elements of nature. There is unity, an interconnection between everything that exists. We are nature. To take care of nature means taking care of ourselves.

## And respect for biodiversity

We must love and respect the earth, so that we can protect and defend the diversity that is the richness of the earth. Respecting all forms of diversity (biodiversity) means reconciling and uniting man with his environment. The earth, because of the diversity it contains, offers itself to humankind as a reflection of God, a place where his creative, providential and redemptive power is revealed. How often have we sought out retreat centers where everything radiates peace, where everything seems to be in harmony between heaven and earth, where we can easily meet and contemplate God through the beauty and simplicity of his creation. We often need a beautiful natural landscape to renew our spirits. For example, one confrere realized that there were no flowers in the garden of the Generalate on the day he wanted a beautiful selfie photo.





One of the gardens of the Generalate of the Missionaries of Africa in Winter

We need harmony with nature. Man sometimes thinks he is alone in the world. More often than not, he forgets that he lives with other creatures. Recent confinements have shown images that confront man with reality: he is not alone in the world. The streets of some towns were invaded by wild boars and donkeys, others by monkeys worried about not seeing tourists. A white spring flower dared to blossom in St Peter's Square in Rome. In some cities, the singing of birds replaced the infernal noise of machines. Besides, the world would be boring if it was inhabited only by humans.

### **Out of respect for the Creator**

To love, respect, protect and defend the earth, because man who is accountable and co-creator, is called to collaborate in the accomplishment of the earth. "What we expect according to the promise of the Lord is a new heaven and a new earth" (2 Pt 3:13). The earth being man's home, the covenant between man and earth must be renewed. There is a risk that science and technology will take over man and lead him to self-destruction, because of the selfishness and pride which they may





generate in him. Thus, science and technology must protect man against his own destruction. Not all development makes conditions for human life on earth better. Those who lived in apartments during the confinement probably needed to take a few hundred steps in a garden or to get some fresh, natural air under the shade of some tree.

We must respect, love and care for the earth because it is a gift. To accept and respect a gift is to respect the “provider”, the origin of the gift. When man ignores the fact that he has been established as a guardian and overseer, yet despises the order of creation, the precise gift of creation, he is gradually and resolutely walking towards his own destruction living in the illusion of false freedom.

The observation is clear: the degradation of the environment and that of human society are two sides of the same coin: “the human environment and the natural environment degrade together”. What to do?

Promote ecological education (LS’ 209ss) as all human beings are concerned (LS’ 13). “A new dialogue” (LS’ 14) is needed. Let us educate children, young people and even adults to open themselves to the infinite beauty, generosity and mystery of our common home. Let us educate them about the wonders of nature. Let us discover the generosity and beauty of the earth, the urgency of protecting and loving it. Let us make known the relationship between man and the universe and let us discover the risks that modern science and technology bring about.

Let us recall the words of Pope Francis during the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day: “God always forgives, man sometimes forgives, the earth never”. The present and the future of the world depend on our involvement in caring for creation. There is a relationship, an interaction between the human beings and nature. Everyone locally can act to take care of our common home. Old Yacouba remains an example of local commitment. Here are two sentences he said on his return from Stockholm: “I know that my work will benefit many people”, “No human being can regret having contributed to the protection of the environment”.

Daniel Nana



# “Our common home: what is my share of responsibility?”



*The community of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa of Nouakchott*

The history of our salvation begins with this wonderful statement: “God saw that everything he created was very good” (Gen 1:3). In fact, “God so loved the cosmos that he sent his Son so that the cosmos might be saved” (Jn 3:16). Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si’* reminds us that “everything is connected” and that we are part of this creation, an integral and interdependent part. This statement inspires our prayer and action.

The use of fabric bags for shopping reduces the use of plastic and paper. In addition to promoting local products, buying at the local market allows us to make vendors and customers more conscious of doing the same, providing concrete examples of why we should support local date or rice producers. In order to reduce pollution, our preference is to favour natural cleaning products: home-made vinegar and bicarbonate soda and, where possible, we use public transport or walk. As a measure to con-

serve water use in the garden, a wastewater reuse system has been installed to reduce water use and the sprinklers can be reused on an as-needed basis. The compost is used for the vegetable garden. Medicinal plants (aloe vera, moringa, neem) and herbs are available for those interested, and are used for training during workshops on gardening and creative care.

## Collaboration

We collaborate with the parish, the sisters, other people and NGOs who promote this cause. Together with the parish, on the occasion of the feast of St. Bakhita, we have been organising the day of prayer and formation against modern slavery for the past three years. During the first year, we prayed together at Sunday mass and distributed information leaflets. Last year the prayer and training took place in our house. This year, in collaboration with the Caritas Migrants Project, a workshop was organised for the youth of the parish. These encounters are an important opportunity to have people share their often painful experiences and to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal migration. The issue of modern slavery remains topical in its various forms. We remain attentive and



An awareness-raising day for reforestation



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give moral support, for example, to people who are exploited in their work.

Concrete actions are taken to protect the environment; such as watering plants with water used in the kitchen, not throwing paper on the streets, taking care of one's notebooks, among other things, to change certain habits. In 2018, in collaboration with 'The Great Green Wall', a training day on environmental conservation was organised. After the workshop, a number of trees were planted in a training centre in Dar el-Barka, and in the homes of those participants who took seedlings and planted them. In our garden, we regularly organise workshops on the environment for children from two projects: Maison du Quartier and Association Soleil des Enfants, which groups around 140 children. They were surprised when they saw for the first time a tomato plant, parsley, a lemon tree, basil, etc., in our garden. There was immense joy when they came in contact with the soil, but also excitement when they planted the seeds. All who were fortunate to do so at home had the opportunity to take pots with them to look after the plants they have sown. These people talked about it and thus made others more aware of the issue of caring for creation.

### Various initiatives

In collaboration with the association "Soleil des enfants" and the Islamic-Christian group, we launched a project to plant trees in Arafat, an outskirt district of Nouakchott. We worked out the project together and presented it to 'La Grande Muraille Verte' and other NGOs. The Arafat youths identified 120 families who wanted a tree on condition that they take care of it. During this process, several awareness-raising meetings were held with the young people. One was led by Yacobo Tandia, the Caritas environmental project manager, another by Mr Bamba, the manager of a project for the preservation of turtles and trees, and the last one with Mr Diallo, a journalist who is sensitive to environmental issues. Throughout each meeting, the young people were encouraged to see the project through to the end, never to back down, to persevere in their project and to dream big, even if, in the end, they achieve little. For a better continuity, they were encouraged to involve the children, but also to col-





Teaching children to plant a tree means a safer future

laborate with the local government and religious leaders, even if the latter were not committed to it; they were at least informed.

In February, the children of the families identified attended a workshop in our home; each one planted a Moringa and will take care of it. The conviction of these young people makes us very happy! During a meeting, they exclaimed: ‘Sister, even if we only plant one tree this year, we have to do it next year, the year after, and all the years to come!’

Our dream has become the dream of others; it is already a reality. Our joy is to see these young people continue the project in their own way. Daughters of Cardinal Lavigerie, we are initiators, we build bridges between people. We share the same concern for the protection of creation, the same hope for a better world!

Lucy, Lucile, Victorine, Celina





# Let us Befriend our Common Home



When I was invited to make a contribution to this edition of the *Petit Echo* dedicated to the commemoration of the 5th anniversary of *Laudato Sí*, I wondered if my contribution would be worthwhile as there is so much literature on this topic already. However, later on, I thought; well my story might connect with other peoples' stories and thus, perhaps, evoke a kind of 'aha' echo, enlivened by knowing that we are not alone in this venture.

Growing up in a village on the beautiful slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, our houses were built in the midst of banana and coffee farms. Nearly every family had a cow, some goats, a dog, a cat and chickens. A symbiotic relationship existed as we got manure for the banana and coffee trees from our animal droppings and fed the animals with banana leaves, stem and peels. We also got milk for our cup of tea from the goats, made sour milk for cooking and for feeding mothers after giving birth. Life was beautiful!

My grandfather had a great love for goats and for keeping our farm tools clean. He would watch as we worked to see whether we were avoiding soiling our hands. If anyone was afraid of soiling his/her hands, he would say: "It is better to get used to the soil so that when you die and are buried there, you will feel at home because you had befriended the earth." Fortunately, I was present when he was dying and his last words

Use of cement bags to stop soil erosion



to me were: “Feed the goats and stop spraying coffee trees with chemicals” - the reason being that he would not be around to buy some local brew for de-intoxicating someone who touches chemicals while spraying. It was amazing how much grandfather knew about the interconnectedness of humans with the earth and the effects of pollution on human beings. His sense of being connected to the soil has stayed with me.

The encyclical *Laudato Si* calls humanity, including the Missionaries of Africa, to reawaken our zeal and dedication towards a holistic ecology. We need to be sensitive to what is happening to our common home and to the various ways she ‘cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. As the encyclical points out, hyper consumerism is one of the contributing factors to the ecological crisis (50).

The encyclical endorses our charism both in terms of JPIC/ED and in our option for simple life style, which promotes respect for and the responsible use of the goods of the earth. Furthermore, it encourages us to go back to our roots and to renew our commitment to care for our common home.



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In many ways, I feel grateful to be part of this family with great ancestors who were committed to integral living. For example, in Nigeria, Mission houses were built in such a way as to make the best use of the natural wind movement for cooling the rooms. Missionaries planted trees and flowers; had orchards, compost sites and organic vegetable gardens wherever they lived. Often, they collected rain water. In addition, they did not throwaway food and leftovers which often came back in different forms as in soups.

We, the Missionaries of Africa, consider JPIC-ED as one of the pillars of Evangelisation. Putting together Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is another way of saying that caring for the environment goes with combating poverty and restoring dignity to the marginalised. Indeed, the degradation of the environment increases the risk of hunger, sickness, conflicts and even death for the most vulnerable. We are interconnected and there is a strong correlation between a healthy environment and the health of human beings. The current Coronavirus pandemic makes this point very clear.

Encounter-and-Dialogue acknowledges the fact that this task has to be done in collaboration with other people. According to Pope Francis “the urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development...” Laudato Si also points out that the complex nature of the environmental problems we are facing today cannot be remedied by individual self-improvement alone. As catalysts, we need to learn new ways of involving others in this noble task through networking, lobbying and organising educational programmes that involve communities.

### Way Forward

Today, before getting new things, we need to discern whether or not they are necessary and not just whether we can afford them. We need to stop getting whatever is unnecessary and unfriendly to our common home.

For non-renewable things like plastics, we must avoid single use items so that what we buy, we can re-use or recycle.

Habitat destruction is the main threat to endangered species. Let us plant trees, flowers and restore wetlands to reduce the threat.



collection of paper for the manufacture of briquettes

Trash is not just ugly, it is harmful and also pollutes natural resources. Put trash in its place.

Avoid using pesticides or fertilisers that contain chemicals as much as possible.

Invite school/parish children/youth to join us in sanitation exercises and in watering trees as we do in Balaka. When children from various pastoral groups visit us, we ensure that they pick up bottle tops and biscuit wrapping papers.

We also collect all the used paper and old newspapers from our house and from a neighbouring secondary school and send them to a centre run by the Missionaries Sisters of our Lady of Africa in Lilongwe to make briquettes, a substitute for firewood.

In addition, we have marked our bins to facilitate sorting out waste.

## **Conclusion**

It is easier to intoxicate our common home than to de-intoxicate her. Consequently, we must have the attitude of gratitude and respect in the use of the goods of the earth. We need to help one another realise that the responsibility of befriending and caring for our common home lies with each one of us. Let us use this year's opportunity to renew and boost our personal and communal commitment to safeguard the environment and to preserve its natural resources for present and future generations.

Erasto Shayo



# **“Can the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil trigger a tornado in Texas?”**



This “butterfly effect” of a mathematical theory describing how “small things can have non-linear impacts on a complex system” (Wikipedia) is often confused with the fact that a small cause may have big effects. But it is true that a small event can have a big effect... An example is how any “Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation” activity, no matter how small, can have an impact, positive or negative, on our environment. Therefore, at a personal level, I try to do everything I can to protect my environment and ensure that our earth continues to be conducive to life and habitable for all, and for a long time to come.

## **My garden**

The promotion of an environmentally friendly (agri) culture in my garden is one way of doing this. To produce, I use compost made from our kitchen waste and organic waste (grass, lawn grass clippings, leaves, waste from our ducks, etc.). I spread the compost on the surface without



burying it on top of a lightly aerated soil with a hoe, I remove weeds and parasite plants all by hand, I eliminate sickly plants; by experience, I constantly adapt to the soil and the climate to reproduce what works in terms of varieties, dates, sowing methods... I combine and vary the crops, I respect wild medicinal plants, and I look for a wide variety of species with aromatic plants, fruit trees or flowers.

My garden hosts all kinds of animals: birds, earthworms, ants, termites, wasps, ladybirds, aphids, snails, various insects... and I tolerate eventual inconveniences, even if I try to reduce pests (collecting snails, caterpillars, and removing rotten fruits). I enjoy taking a bowl of different vegetables and fruit to the kitchen every morning and I prefer to eat what comes out of our garden, even if certain produce may not appear attractive at the market (small seize, sometimes stained, sometimes attacked by worms).

## Waste and resource management

My second challenge is about waste and how to limit, sort and recycle it: avoid using disposables (paper towels, batteries), collect unwanted objects lying around in the garden (plastic, glass, fabric, iron, sponges...), sort our rubbish bins in order to reduce as much as possible what we get



Brother Pierre in the garden of the Provincial House of Bukavu



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rid of via a private company in the city, compost all organic waste, burn paper and cardboard, encourage recycling (printer cartridges), reuse what can be reused (glass jars, plastic containers...).

A third area is to save our resources: water and energy. For example, collect rainwater, avoid unnecessary water run-off, turning off unnecessary lights, using public transport, preferring cycling to driving, choosing land transport rather than air transport, eating less meat and more vegetables... Don't we say that "small streams make big rivers"?

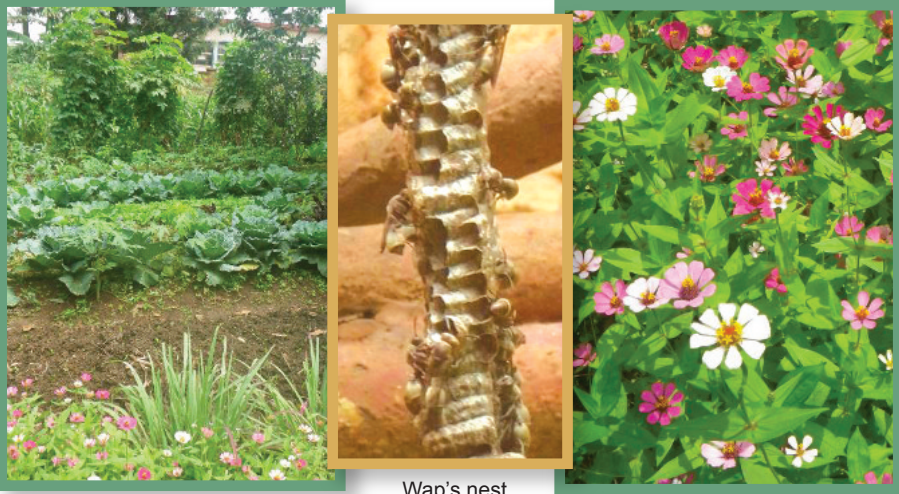
### **Consider the following small streams**

A series of monthly retreats proposed by the Society have enabled these themes to be explored in greater depth. In May 2017, the White Fathers and White Sisters of Bukavu met to watch the film 'Home'. This film deals with themes raised by 'Laudato si': irresponsible exploitation of the Earth's resources with no concern for the consequences on future life, a Western standard of living that is too energy consuming and highly polluting, and which can no longer be sustained. Everyone was asked what they can do to promote more sobriety and environmental protection, a sustainable and integral development, which takes into account all areas and all people, rich and poor, because everything is linked.

A confrere, formator at the pre-first phase center, surprised his immediate circle as he went around picking up the rubbish on the property and its surroundings and did everything possible to keep the neighboring street clean despite the continual dumping of rubbish.

The Ruzizi philosophy community has included in its 2019-2020 community project the objective of protecting the environment and has set up an "environmental team" with the aim of taking care of the property, stopping pollution and maintaining the environment. For example, a member of staff supported a project to recycle plastic to produce paving stones or fuel. Papers are transformed into bricks to be used in cooking (cfr. article of Tshiasuma Kasende Anaclet in "Echos de la Ruzizi").

In their deanery, the confreres of the parish of Buholo were made aware of the problems of deforestation, erosion and landslides which



Wap's nest

Nature lives in complementarity

threaten the population of Bukavu. On the grounds of the presbytery, they tried out a vertical garden with salvaged jerry cans. They are encouraging a group of young people to set up rubbish bins and organize rubbish collection.

These issues are complex and require everyone's commitment and contribution. With courage and patience, I need to "convert" those around me to choose a life that is more respectful of our environment and that benefits everyone. I must, however, accept the diversity of viewpoints that exist on this issue as well as the fact that these choices are not universal.

Politically, I favor elected representatives who are sensitive to these issues, which are becoming more and more present in the debates and concerns of the younger generations. With the commitment and competences of many, these numerous butterfly wing flappings will then produce a breath of life for our earth: "We shouldn't think that these efforts won't change the world" (Laudato sí, nr. 212) ...

Pierre Petitfour



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# LAUDATO SI' in Action, a way to go.



Witnesses we are to the exploitation that takes place in and around the gold, coltan, cobalt, lithium and uranium mines. Yes, we are! Witnesses we are to the effects of environmental degradation, insecurity, violence and the suffering of people. Yes, we are!

We are witnesses to environmental degradation, deforestation, urban pollution, plastic pollution of the environment. Yes, we are! Witnesses of the diseases caused by pollution and lack of hygiene, and of the animals that are dying having ingested plastic bags.

We are witnesses of what is happening around us in our Common Home. Draw from your own daily experience, complete this long list of cries that echo both “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49).

A number of crucial questions then arise: how do we feel listening to such cries? What impact do they have on our lives and on our commitment to mission? “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to the children who are now growing up?” This is the concrete question put by the encyclical “Laudato si’” (LS 160).

This remarkable document of the Church’s social teaching has offered us, for the past five years, thoughts for analysis, reflection and commit-



ment that take into consideration both “environmental degradation and human and ethical degradation” (LS 56). “Everything is connected. Concern for the environment must be united with a sincere love for human beings and a constant commitment to the problems of society” (LS 91).

Everyone today is aware that the extent of environmental degradation and the impact of climate change on living beings require more than just personal and one-off initiatives!

On the occasion of the 5th anniversary of “*Laudato si*” the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development (DPDIH) recalls the urgency of the global situation which requires immediate, global and unified responses at all levels, local, regional, national and international. “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvement and talents.” (LS 14).

The DPDIH has taken the initiative to launch the “LAUDATO SI’ IN ACTION” platform. Various groups and institutions [see box], are invited to embark on a 7-year journey. It is a 7-year journey to make our communities fully sustainable according to the spirit of LAUDATO SI’ integral ecology. 7 years? Sounds like a long journey. While reading this number 7, reading it out loud, I already imagine some apprehensions animated by fear, doubt, comfort, and voices whispering: That again! What’s the point?

The complexity and the vastness of the issues involved, our own limited possibilities, our multiple pastoral activities, ... all kinds of reasons could be put forward to keep the status quo.

I wonder how come our founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, managed to get involved in the anti-slavery campaign. How could he have wanted to abolish institutionalized slavery, rooted in the socio-economic and political system for centuries and considered by the people of the time as “normal”? Was it not sheer madness to want to attack and abolish such a dehumanizing and unjust system?

Boldness, courage, perseverance, zeal, energy, motivation, desire, vision, the Cardinal did not lack any of these. He was not alone in his commitment against slavery. Other religious actors, politicians, people





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animated by universal humanism contributed, each for their part, to the process of transformation which led to the official abolition of slavery.

So what about today? We are witnesses of new forms of slavery, exploitation of children, women and migrants. What would our founder have said to you, to me, to all of us? What would he have written in his letters to the members of the Society?

This slavery of the 21st century is once again taking on dramatic proportions, certainly also in connection with forced human mobility due to the degradation and exploitation of the earth and climate change.

First and foremost, we need an holistic approach, since “everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” (LS 137).

The DPDIH in collaboration with the Global Catholic Climate Movement and the JPIC Commission in Rome, proposes a systemic, institutional and transformative approach that will implement a progressive and dynamic process of involvement using the “See - Discern (Judge) - Act” method. “Interdependence obliges us to think of one world, a common project” (LS 164). In this perspective, *LAUDATO SI’ IN ACTION* explicitly addresses religious men and women and members of missionary societies so that they may contribute and offer their capacities, charisms and internal and external resources for the transformation of the Catholic Church and the world in the spirit of integral ecology.

During the 7-year journey, we will be invited to live the 7 objectives of integral ecology: to respond to the cry of the Earth; to respond to the cry of the poor; to achieve an ecological economy; to adopt simple lifestyles; to achieve ecological education; to achieve an ecological spirituality; to emphasize community involvement and participatory action. [See box]

It is interesting to note that the global and ecclesial initiative of “*LAUDATO SI’ IN ACTION*” is fully in line with our missionary priorities. The 24th Chapter 1992, called for “preserving the integrity of creation” (no. 11) and for “cooperation... common reflection... actions for... environmental problems” (no. 96). The 25th Chapter 1998, called for “helping all confreres and communities to integrate justice, peace and respect for creation as an essential dimension of our missionary life”

(p.61). And the 28th Chapter 2016, placed strong emphasis on eco-spirituality (1.3) and a Green Church (3.1.b).

So, “LAUDATO SI’ IN ACTION” is an extraordinary opportunity to walk together with so many other actors. We will not be alone. Myriads of initiatives and alternatives are already underway. Let us join this movement with joy and hope, audacity and zeal! Let us accompany each other. Let us be prophetic witnesses by working for the Common Home together with all our fellow human beings, all brothers and sisters.

Andreas Göpfert

## Institutions and target groups to engage in **LAUDATO SI’ IN ACTION**

1. **LAUDATO SI’ FAMILIES :**  
*Families embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology*
2. **LAUDATO SI’ DIOCESES :**  
*Dioceses/Parishes embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology*
3. **LAUDATO SI’ SCHOOLS :**  
*Schools embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology*
4. **LAUDATO SI’ UNIVERSITIES :**  
*Universities/Colleges embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology*
5. **LAUDATO SI’ HOSPITALS / HEALTH CARE CENTRES:**  
*Hospitals/Health Care Centres embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology*
6. **LAUDATO SI’ BUSINESSES / AGRICULTURAL FARMS, ETC.:**  
*Businesses/Farms embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology:*
7. **LAUDATO SI’ RELIGIOUS ORDERS:**  
*Religious Orders/Provinces embarking a 7-years journey towards integral ecology.*



# Responsible and moderate use of our social networks.



Dear confrères, allow me to share with you my concerns about the management and the use of our social networks.

We are really lucky to have the social networks that allow us to communicate, in real time, day and night. They allow us both to follow the daily news and to share our daily experiences, even in image and with sound.

A few years ago I noticed this inseparable attachment to our mobile phones which seemed to have taken over the traditional means of communication such as newspapers, radio, computers and television. Sadly one can notice this predominance of mobile phones during our community meals, during television viewing, on community trips... The continuous use of mobile phones has reached a stage where the traditional oral communication (conversation) even between two confrères has become inconceivable without being interrupted by phone calls from outside and by fiddling with the mobile phone for matters of more urgent



and important content than the confrère right in front of us. Some colleagues, out of respect or for the discretion of the confrere next door, move away or disappear in their flat without any certainty of their immediate return if ever there will be one.

Unless there is a mistake, all mobile phones have a button that allows them to be put in silent mode in public places or when meeting with another person. There is also a vibration mode which is sometimes even louder than the normal voice mode. In the absence of one or the other of these keys that do not disturb our neighbor, there is also the key that allows you to switch the mobile phone off and on at will. How many of us are willing to use these keys in a responsible and moderate way?

## **Sorting out.**

Our Whatsapp groups have applications that allow us to communicate quickly and efficiently with each other. They allow us to share messages, photos and videos in real time. They even allow us to relax and sometimes help us to better manage our stress. However, these messages in our Provincial Whatsapp group very often come to us in large quantities and in a disorganized manner that can cause us to lose track of events. For example, hardly a message announcing the passing away or the illness of someone has reached us that we get overloaded with messages of birthdays and other kinds of celebrations. Are we capable of sorting out the most essential things to be shared?

## **Celebration of birthdays.**

We were used to one or the other celebrating his jubilee, silver (25 years), gold (50 years), diamond (60 or 75 years) whether of the Oath or of the priesthood. Nowadays it is the birthday of one year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years..., 21 years, 22 years, 23 years..., 30 years, 31 years, 33 years... 41 years, 42 years, 43 years and so on. Do we really need these pompous celebrations every year? How much time do we spend on them with our confreres, parents, friends and relatives? How much money is spent on them? Will a simple reminder in our various prayers not suffice as a reminder of these annual anniversaries of the Oath and of priesthood? Are we capable of commemorating them in private, discreetly



and simply? For example, can we use other private WhatsApp groups, Facebook or other social networks other than our Provincial WhatsApp group to celebrate these annual anniversaries? How about limiting our WhatsApp pages to the traditional jubilees of 25 years, 50 years, 60 years, 65 years, 70 years, 75 years, 80 years...?

### **Celebration of patron saints.**

There are also in our Provincial WhatsApp groups echoes of celebrations of our patron saints. I am very much in favor of birthday celebrations in our Provincial WhatsApp group. However, I have my reservations about the celebration of patronal feasts in our WhatsApp group. In my opinion, this can be done in other private WhatsApp groups or sometimes by our Provincials who try to encourage us in a fraternal way by phone, email or text message. It can also be done discreetly between family, friends, relatives and acquaintances with the social networking means of their choice.

### **Be sure to identify and specify the event(s)!**

In any case, it would be helpful to specify both the name of the person we are celebrating and what exactly we are celebrating in our Provincial WhatsApp group. Many of us have the same first and last names. It is always helpful to specify the first and last name so as not to cause confusion. Likewise, it should be made clear whether it is a birthday, missionary Oath, priesthood or patron saint. Understandably, only the first person to announce the birthday is obliged to make these clarifications. Those who comment afterwards are no longer required to repeat these details as it should be clear who is celebrating and what he is celebrating.

Dear confreres, this is what I have to share with you and I leave it to your own good discernment. Thank you for your attention. I wish you all a happy Patron Saint's Day of St Camille de Lellis or Our Lady of Mount Carmel. May God support us in the mission that He has entrusted to each one of us.

Simon Amy Gornah



## Paul Tremblay 1928 – 2020



**P**aul was born on June 26, 1928 in Montreal. He was the second son of Joseph-Albert Tremblay and Léda Meunier; the family had four children, one girl and three boys. Unfortunately, Paul lost his mother at the age of five.

His primary education was first at the kindergarten and then at St-Nicolas d’Ahunsic School in Montreal under the direction of “les Clercs de St-Viateur”, then did his secondary studies at the seminary of Joliette together with his two

brothers. It was during these eight years that the idea of becoming a missionary was born and grew and developed in him. The witness of some visiting missionaries at the seminary and the diligent reading of missionary magazines led him gradually to reflect and then decide to join the Missionaries of Africa.

He began his novitiate on August 2, 1948 in St-Martin de Laval. It would be a particularly difficult year for him. Being rather active by nature, silence and regulation seemed to oppress him. Twice, he seriously thought about leaving. Later, he wrote: “I believe that the Lord wanted to purify my feelings and desires. »

Later, he went to Eastview for his theological studies. He was esteemed by his formators and well loved by his confreres. He loved to make people laugh. He was ordained a priest on February 8, 1953 in Montreal by Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger.

After a few months of initiation to British customs in England in early 1954, he was appointed to the Diocese of Mwanza in Tanzania.



During his first six years, he served in eight different parishes, either as vicar or parish priest. He found this very difficult. He had the impression that the bishop used him as a “stopgap”. In 1961, he was invited to open a new parish, Ng’wagika, on the shores of Lake Victoria. And he worked there for 22 years. He wrote: “The people were very concerned about building their parish. Joy, hospitality, generosity and dedication were qualities they never lacked. Those years were among the happiest of my missionary life. »

In October 83, as he was returning from an outstation on a Sunday afternoon, the Guillain-Barré virus suddenly struck and paralyzed him completely from head to toe. Then, at the age of 55, he was rushed back to Canada, unconscious, lying on a stretcher. He later wrote: “Being paralyzed is a very trying experience. Becoming dependent on everything makes you feel incredibly useless. In addition, inactivity kills me ... I feel that I am dependent on everyone for the smallest activities in my life. Morale takes a hit and discouragement arises at any moment.»

He spent two years in hospitals and rehabilitation centers in Mon-

tréal. A lot of physiotherapy exercises gave him some recovery but he could no longer walk. Father Denis-Paul Hamelin, his provincial at the time in Canada, wrote about him: “I can tell you that rehabilitation for him was a painful experience. I observed his struggle and the states of mind that Paul went through. It was moments of depression followed by periods of optimism about the progress he was making or, to put it even simpler: the ups of slight optimism and the very deep lows followed one another! This became a bit of a pattern for his new life! But what was remarkable in his whole life: Paul always bounced back! »

In 1986, on completion of his treatments, he joined the provincial house on Boulevard de l’Acadie in Montreal. He was at the service of his confreres and carried out various tasks there. He was responsible for the organization of the confreres’ trips, the missionary service, the book service and subscriptions. He was also chaplain to a nearby primary school. He gave religious classes there. He also coordinated the “Joie de vivre” group, which brought people who had experienced the loss of a spouse or partner and were alone. Several members of this group could testify to the



great good he accomplished among them.

When the provincial house was closed on May 1, 2009, he moved to Manoir Bois-de-Boulogne, a retirement home near Boulevard l'Acadie. He became the chaplain of this house and rendered many services in the community among the residents. In 2017 Paul was once again in hospital. When he was discharged, he could not return to his previous residence because of his physical limitations. He then went to the house of the Sisters of Providence in Cartierville, where several nuns and religious, including the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, were living. They offered him a place on the floor where the Franciscan fathers were already living. He was surrounded by many, especially numerous white sisters, some of whom had known him in Tanzania. He welcomed with joy

many visitors not only from his family, but also from his confreres and many other people. He also published well-presented documents on the gospel which he sent to his friends via the internet. Thus he continued to reach out to many of his acquaintances and helped them to deepen their faith.

At the beginning of August 2020, Paul manifested an unusual weakness. He discreetly left us on August 9, at the age of 92. His funeral took place on August 20 at the Sisters of Providence house, presided over by Father Réal Doucet, Provincial of the Americas and former confrere of Paul, in Ng'wangika, Tanzania, from 1979 to 1983. His ashes are buried in the cemetery of St-Martin parish in Laval, in the plot of the Missionaries of Africa. May He rest in peace!

Jacques Charron



### Marc Deneckere

1932 - 2010



**M**arc was born in Kortrijk on January 16, 1932 into a very Christian and religious family. The father ran a wholesale coal business. The family had eleven children. Marc studied the Greco-Latin humanities at the College Saint-Amand in his hometown. In September 1952 he entered the White Fathers in Boechout, with his younger brother and godson Jo, following him a few years later. Marc did the novitiate in Varsenare and his theological studies in Heverlee, where he took his missionary oath on July 5, 1958 and was ordained priest on February 2, 1959 by Bishop

Geeraerts. From the very beginning of his formation Marc was remarkable for his great generosity, with a heart of gold (with the risk) of allowing himself to be taken advantage of. He was always in a good mood, always happy, helpful, and very dedicated to manual work. He was a pleasant confrere, very simple in his relationships, rather quiet, a little shy. "He will be comfortable in the bush and in a mission involving a lot of physical work".

After six months of classes at the University of Louvain in lieu of military service, Marc left on April 5, 1960 for Ituri in northeastern Congo, three months before independence. During the first months in the diocese of Bunia, he learnt the Kilendu language in Pimbo and Fataki. He was then appointed vicar in Jiba. In 1964 he found himself in the midst of the great insurrection of the Simbas. "Together with many fathers and sisters, we were locked up for a whole month in a school and a convent of the Sisters of Ingelmunster". They would remain there until their release and evacuation by the Para commandos. He would never forget it! At the beginning of July 1965, he returned to his post at Jiba,



where he built the convent of the sisters. From 1970, according to his own account, he was consecutively parish priest in three parishes, each time by chance for ten years, before handing over the baton to the diocesan clergy. These were Fataki, Pimbo and Drodoro, with some replacements in other parishes from time to time. Marc had mixed feelings during these transfers: sadness at having to leave those he loved so much and joy for the mission accomplished. In 1985, he needed to be treated for throat problems, fortunately less serious than had been feared. His last appointment to Drodoro did not excite him, but he wrote to the provincial of Belgium: "I am convinced that even here in Drodoro I will be a happy missionary... God is my shield!"

After Drodoro, Marc was sent to Badiya because the White Fathers handed over the whole Lendu region to the local clergy. The problem: the language was no longer Kilendu but Swahili. This was a difficult challenge at his age, but the result was positive. In 1994, he participated in the transition session in Rome. In April 1995, Deneckere's mother died at the age of 92. During the invasion of Kabila-father, who was helped by the Rwandans to overthrow Mobutu, Marc was again evacuated via Kampala in December 1996. He then worked for several months as bursar

of the "Blauwe Torre" project in Varsenare and participated in the activities of the Center. He got to know several parishes and often went to talks in missionary circles. In October 1998, he returned to Bunia, where he was in charge of the reception and bursar's office in the regional house. On several occasions he gave a helping hand in the parish. The poverty in the city was such that his heart could not resist the many poor people who came knocking on his door... In February 2003, he was deported from the country by the leader of the rebels, Thomas Lubanga, who at that time was holding the scepter in Bunia. Marc recounts, "Why was I kicked out? I had just demonstrated a little too much that as a missionary I made no distinction between ethnic groups when it came to helping people. I had indeed provided safe lodgings for fleeing Lendu families whose homes had been burned down by hema (people opposed to the Lendu). For this Hema militia leader, it was an act of treason. So I had to leave". In the "procès verbal de reculement" there were the following charges: "He was involved in clandestine activities of a subversive nature, in particular 1. Clandestine lodging of displaced persons with the intention of jeopardizing the Movement with regard to the security of persons and freedom of movement in the territory under the control of





the U.P.C./R.P.” (Union of Congolese Patriots for Reconciliation and Peace, Thomas Lubanga’s main Hema militia). 2. Liaising with the negative forces that are hindering the Pacification and Reconciliation process. From all of the above, we have declared the aforementioned PERSONA NON GRATA over the entire area controlled by the U.P.C./R.P.”. Father Jean Mottoul would receive the same letter a few days later. The direct and courageous intervention of Father Jan Mol, Regional, did not change anything. The radio and television stations raged against the White Fathers and Marc in particular. His brother Jo was also falsely accused. It was obvious that the missionaries were embarrassing witnesses to the many injustices. It was preferable to send them away. Hundreds of White Fathers worked in Ituri, but it was precisely Marc, perhaps the one most loved by the little people among all these White Fathers, who had to take his leave in this way. “Blessed are the meek!”...

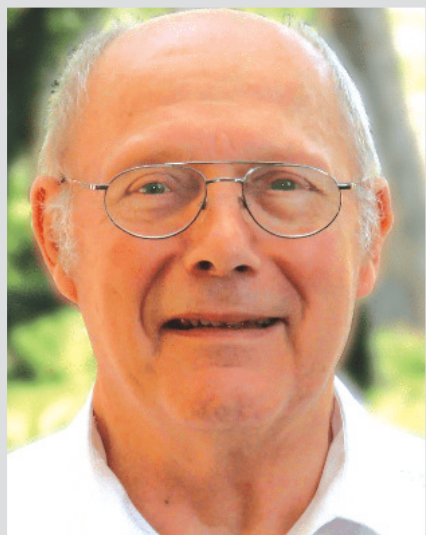
In Belgium, once he recovered from his emotions, Marc was for a few months bursar in our community of Bruges. In October 2004, he was called upon for the important bursar’s office at the Keizerstraat in Antwerp. Always ready to help and find a good solution to everybody’s problems, he was supported and appreciated by both the confreres and the

staff. In 2009 he celebrated his golden jubilee in the Church of St. Elizabeth in Kortrijk, in the company of many family members and acquaintances. On this occasion he wrote in the parish newspaper ‘Kerk&Leven’: “As a missionary I have been sent by Christ and the Church to bring a message of peace, reconciliation and joy to people. After 50 years of priestly and missionary life, I have the joy of testifying before you that I am a grateful and happy missionary. Grateful to the Lord for my vocation. Grateful to my family and fellow countrymen for their kindness and support. Grateful to the people of the Diocese of Bunia, because they gave me the opportunity to proclaim and live among them God’s love for us. And all this makes me a deeply happy man”. In 2013, Marc truly retired and joined the community of Varsenare, where he increasingly emanated deep peace and joy. He passed away slowly, on the evening of August 10th, in his armchair in front of his television set...

Corona rules does not allow for exceptions! About ten family members and a few confreres from his brother; Jo’s community were able to attend the funeral on Friday the 14th, at 10:30 a.m. in Varsenare. The family plans to organize a commemoration later in Kortrijk.

Jef Vleugels

## Wolfgang Büth 1938 - 2020



**S**uddenly and unexpectedly, even for the doctors at the university hospital, God called his faithful missionary to Himself. A massive cerebral haemorrhage was diagnosed immediately, but the doctors did not manage to save his life.

Father Wolfgang Büth was born in Dortmund on 5 May 1938. His parents owned a drugstore and a grocery shop in a suburb of Dortmund, in Huckarde where he grew up together with his elder brother. Wolfgang wrote: “As my parents

were both in the business, my brother and I were often left to our own devices, which did not exactly contribute to our upbringing”. Wolfgang spent his secondary school years in public schools and later went to a Catholic boarding school in Lüdinghausen. In his home parish he was a leader of the altar servers and was in the youth movement ‘Neudeutschland’.

Through his maternal uncle, who was a Franciscan missionary in Brazil, the desire to become a missionary too was awakened in Wolfgang. Georg Völlinger W.F., his elder brother’s friend, was an enthusiastic missionary and had the gift of inspiring others. He showed Wolfgang the way to the W.F. In 1958, Wolfgang visited P. Völlinger in Totteridge and was impressed by the international atmosphere in the house, which gave him ‘a taste of the wider world’.

In 1960, Wolfgang did his philosophy in Trier while the novitiate would be in Hörstel. He was very interested in foreign languages and since he already spoke good English, he asked to be allowed to



begin the study of theology in Vals/France in order to learn French, with students from 10 different nationalities. That pleased him very much. In June 1965, he took his missionary oath in Vals and in 1966, he was ordained priest in Frankfurt-Seckbach together with six other deacons.

Before his first trip to Tanzania, Wolfgang attended a pastoral course in London. After his arrival in Africa he started the language course in Kipalapala. The political system in Tanzania at that time was determined by the so-called African Socialism (Ujamaa), which had been introduced by the first president and practicing Catholic Julius Nyerere, whom many admired at that time.

He was in the parish of Mkulwe in the Diocese of Mbeya together with Fr. Wigger and would later refer to it as an ideal place for his initiation. After two years he became parish priest in the neighbouring station Kamsamba. Both stations are situated in the hot plain of Lake Rukwa, with about 50 outstations that were very far and difficult to reach. Most of his work was in primary evangelisation.

Wolfgang's mother died in 1971, three weeks before his home leave.

His father asked him to remain in Germany and the then Provincial, Father Steinkamp, agreed. During his five years in Germany he was an adviser in the missionary animator of MISSIO-Aachen, first in the Archdiocese of Cologne, then in the Diocese of Aachen.

In 1976, Wolfgang went back to the diocese of Mbeya and to the parishes of Mkulwe and Kamsamba. In 1981, he followed the call to Irambo high in the mountains at 2000 meters above sea level from where he supervised a second parish, Igulusi in the Usangu plain. He organised training courses for prospective catechists from all over the diocese each year. Wolfgang left his mark through the realisation of many projects in Irambo. Wolfgang was allowed to take a sabbatical year in 1984/85, and he went to Chicago, where he mainly attended Bible courses. Besides his studies he was helping out in a parish with 90% Afro-Americans.

No sooner had Fr Büth returned from the three-month Bible course and the 30-day retreat from Jerusalem than he was elected Regional Assistant with his base in Dar-es-Salaam in 1990. The election was probably a sign that he was appreciated by the confreres, but it was



also associated with a painful farewell. The Regional Gérard Chabannon had two assistants, with one staying with him in Nyegezi. The confreres from the south of the country, found Nyegezi too far away, while Dar-es-Salaam was also more convenient for the confreres from Nairobi. His tenure ended after 6 years. Wolfgang would stay in the parish of Kakonko in the diocese of Kigoma which is on the border to Burundi until his home leave. There a lot of pastoral work was waiting for him, because he had to replace a sick confrere looked after two refugee camps which belonged to the parish. This experience exposed him to the unimaginable sufferings of the refugees after the genocide in Rwanda.

During his home leave in 1998, Wolfgang took a course in Dalgan Park, Ireland, on 'Psycho-Synthesis' and back in Tanzania he was appointed to the diocese of Mwanza, to Bukumbi, the first parish founded by the W.Fs. on the shores of Lake Victoria. He participated closely and with interest in the two-year synod of the archdiocese of Mwanza, which helped to renew the life of the Church. The archbishop of Mwanza wrote in his condolences: "We will ever treasure his contribution to the Archdiocese of

Mwanza as the Parish Priest of Bukumbi and as a member of the College of Consultors".

In 2002, Wolfgang was asked to return to the diocese of Mbeya. He went to the parish of Nzovwe in a community of 5 confreres. Unfortunately, the experience lasted only one year before he was appointed to his home province.

From 2003, Wolfgang was able to put his rich experience as Vice-Provincial in Africa at the service of the German confreres. In 2008, he was appointed Sector Delegate. In all communities Wolfgang was highly appreciated because he was always friendly and very helpful and carried out his tasks conscientiously and accurately. As a confrere who appreciated dialogue, he endeavoured to please everyone in his own way. Even at home, his heart remained connected to the places of his work in Africa and he was always happy to share his experiences with the confreres. During liturgical celebrations he showed a special reverence and dignity and tried to bring the message of the Lord to all with clarity and appropriate words. As he often mentioned, his time in Chicago in particular helped him to develop an interest and a love for Sacred Scripture,



which was then deepened during the months in the Holy Land.

It was not until 2012, that the long-awaited return to Nzovwe, a suburb of the city of Mbeya, from where he had been transferred to Cologne nine years ago became a reality. He would have liked to still take part in the feast of Pentecost in his home parish of St. Urbanus in Huckarde which is celebrated with a procession and a funfair. Back in Tanzania he quickly settled in his former parish where he knew the Christians very well. In the diocese of Mbeya, Fr. Büth, in co-operation with his tireless catechists, could see the fruits of seeds he had sown earlier. When he arrived in the diocese in 1967, there were 40 White Fathers and 8 local diocesan priests. Now, on his arrival, there were 5 White Fathers and over 100 diocesan priests. Wolfgang liked to talk about Fr Vitus, whom he still knew as a student during his time in Kamsamba, in the Rukwa valley. On the silver Jubilee of Wolfgang's ordination, Vitus told the story of his own vocation. When he was still in primary school, a priest came to his village and celebrated Holy Mass. This event so impressed the boy that he stole a

dress that looked like a chasuble from his mother's wardrobe, he put it on and gathered his younger brothers and sisters together and began to "celebrate" Holy Mass like the Father had done, starting with "May the Lord be with you". Today Vitus is a Doctor of Theology. He studied in Rome and worked for 12 years in the pastoral department of the secretariat of the Tanzanian Bishops' Conference. This is how God recruits his co-workers.

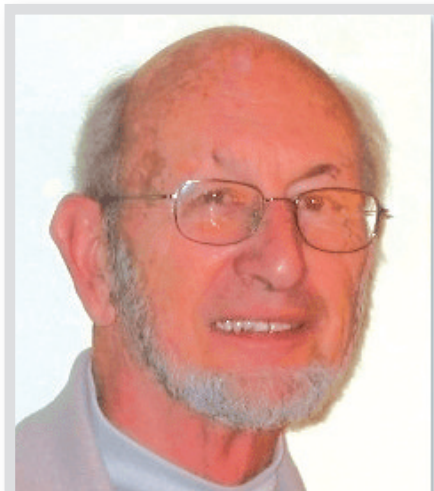
After 50 years of blessed work in Africa and Germany, Wolfgang said goodbye to his beloved Africa and returned as a retired missionary in the community at Cologne in 2018. But it was not for him a time to rest and rust. He was a very loving and straightforward confrere in our large community, he maintained contact with all confreres and gladly helped out in parishes. °

He had severe problems with his spine which led to a stay in the Vinzens Hospital; from where he was transferred to the University Hospital for more intensive treatment. There, God brought to a close the life of his faithful missionary.

Günther Zahn.



## Bernard Jobin 1924 - 2020



**B**ernard was born on July 23rd 1924, the third of four brothers. He spent his childhood in Saignelégier in the Franches-Montagnes, in the canton of Jura in Switzerland. During his youth, he enthusiastically joined the scout movement in his parish. At the age of 14, he lost his father. That year he began his secondary education at the “Collège Saint-Michel” in Fribourg, and later continued his studies in Einsiedeln.

In 1944, he enrolled at the Polytechnicum in Zurich, where he studied architecture. The experience at this university did not meet his

expectations. The desire gradually grew in him to make his knowledge available to poor people who needed it for their own development. With the war (1939-1945) ending, openness to the outside world was growing. There was also a growing interest in the Third World, Africa and foreign missions. Bernard perceived in this a personal call and chose to join the White Fathers. To mature in his vocation, he was asked to do a year of philosophy at the University of Fribourg. In September 1946, he went to Maison-Carrée in Algeria for his novitiate and to Tunisia for his four years of theology. On March 24, 1951, he was ordained priest.

For 7 years, he taught at the “Institut Lavigerie”, in St-Maurice, in the canton of Valais. He taught French, history, religion, art and was in charge of physical education. In addition to the winter program, he also organized ski camps. Together with his confreres he did some ministry in the neighbouring parishes. During all his activities Bernard never lost sight of his African project. He continued his training at the “École des Beaux-Arts”



in Sion. In 1958, at the end of the school year, he received his appointment for Burundi. His departure was set for 15th September.

Burundi was his adopted country for 12 years. On arrival his bishop sent him to the parish of Gisuru, whose parish priest was his compatriot Anton Berchtold. The important task was to learn Kirundi, the language of the country. He was well launched into this study when he received this message: "You have to go the diocesan headquarters right away". An urgent architectural work awaited him. He successfully passed the language exam on 20th July 1959.

In 1962, Burundi gained independence. A new era began for Bernard, who had lived for years in Burundi that was then under Belgian rule (1958-1962). In 1963, he took his first home leave in Switzerland to regain his strength. On his return, at the request of his bishop, he headed the diocesan secretariat of Gitega for a while.

In 1965, many Rwandans and their families sought refuge in Uganda, Zaire and Burundi following the unrest in their homeland after independence. Almost 25,000 of them settled in the camp at Gishungu. Bernard and one of his

confrères moved there; they lived in a hangar measuring 5m by 5m. During the 6 months that he spent in this camp he helped many sick people, thus earning himself a reputation as a healer. He also laid the foundations for a future parish that would eventually be run by local priests. He returned to Gitega in January 1967. He worked with Caritas Burundi in Bujumbura for two years.

In January 1970, he moved the architect's office to Kigali (Rwanda). During this time, he had to provide training for indigenous draftsmen in order to set up his numerous projects: dispensaries, hospitals, maternity wards, schools, churches, etc. Most of these projects, spread over a period of twenty years, were carried out in Burundi and in Rwanda. However, he was called upon as an expert for constructions in Zaire, Uganda and Senegal. This project involved the building of silos for the storage of grain, at the request of the American Catholic Relief Services. In 1978, he took a sabbatical in Switzerland and Louvain-la-Neuve, before returning to Rwanda.

In December 1989, almost paralyzed with a slipped disc, he was repatriated for the second time on



a stretcher by plane. After two months of hospitalization in a clinic in Basel-Landschaft, he was told by the doctor in charge: “We’ll talk about going back to Africa another time”. The verdict fell like a knife cutting the thread of the pattern of his African missionary life.

In August 1990, he went to Montreal where he trained in psychology at the Institute of Human Formation for two years. He would later write: “These courses led me to building up people... I had the gratifying experience that the first person I had to build was myself”. This belated training - at 66 years of age, enabled him to take up a new activity: accompanying people, both individually and during sessions in Switzerland, Belgium, France and Italy. Residing in Fribourg, then in Veyras, he worked in this ministry for about ten years (1992-2002).

During the same period, the Bishop of Sion invited him to be part of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of his diocese, as defender of the bond and promotor of justice for marriage cases. The Bishop also asked him

to attend to people who asked for exorcism and to help them in the discernment process.

From 2007, health problems (insomnia, thrombosis, back pain, heart condition) forced him to limit his commitments. In 2010, he settled permanently in Veyras where he celebrated his 60th anniversary of oath. The following year, he published his book “Parcours africains”, which was edited by himself. In it, Bernard gives the witness of his 35 years spent in Africa: “I was both a missionary and an architect... I tried to be as much of missionary as an architect... I tried to be both, one in no way hindering the other, the two harmoniously complementing each other. »

During his last years, Bernard had difficulty getting around and had to be hospitalized several times. He entered the Foyer St-Joseph for the elderly in Sierre on January 23rd, 2020; he died there on June 12th. A few confreres from the sector and members of his family gathered in Veyras on 26th June for a Mass celebrated in his memory.

J.-M. Gabioud



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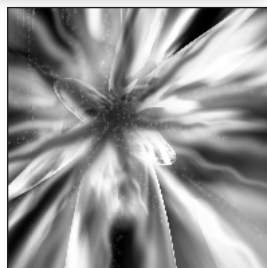
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## Missionaries of Africa

**Father Adriaan van de Laak**, of the diocese of 'sHertogenbosch, the Netherlands. He died in Horn, the Netherlands, on the 31st October 2020, at the age of 99 years, of which 75 years of missionary life in DR Congo and the Netherlands.

**Father Walrave Neven**, of the Diocese of Liège, Belgium. He died in Brussels, Belgium, on the 16th of November 2020, at the age of 93 years, of which 69 years of Missionary life in Burundi, Italy, DR Congo and Belgium.

**Father Benacchio Nazzareno**, of the Diocese of Padova, Italy. He died in Itapeva, Brasil, on the 16th November 2020, at the age of 97 years, of which 73 years of Missionary Life in Italy, DR Congo, and Brasil.

**Father André Bertholet**, of the Diocese of Namur, Belgium. He died in Namur, Belgium, on the 17th November 2020, at the age of 77 years of which 53 years of Missionary Life in Algeria, Tunisia, France and Belgium.

## Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

**Sister Danielle Follain (Augustin de Thagaste)**. She died in Trier in Marseilles "Les Accates", on the 7th November 2020, at the age of 89 years, of which 61 years of missionary life in Algeria, Mali and France.

**Sister Thérèse Gravel (Sr. Jean-Luc)**. She died in Montreal, Canada, on the 10th November 2020, at the age of 95 years of which 69 years of missionary life in Kenya, Uganda and Canada.

**Sister Thérèse Devulder (Thérèse Roberte)**. She died in Lille, France, on the 10th November 2020 at the age of 89 years of which 63 years of religious missionary life in Burundi, Rwanda, DR Congo, Belgium and France.

**Sister M.a del Pilar Hernandez**. She died in Madrid, Spain, on the 11th of November 2020, at the age of 87 years of which 62 years of religious missionary life in Burundi, Rwanda and Spain.

**Sister Léontine Baulieu (Thérèse Colette)**. She died in Massy, France, on the 15th November 2020, at the age of 97 years, of which 71 years of Missionary Life in Algeria, Italy and France.

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