

# PETIT ECHO

2021 / 03

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MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA



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## EDITOR'S WORD

In this number 3 issue, the first phase formators tell us about their mission in the formation houses.

In the first phase of formation, the foundations of life in the Society of Missionaries of Africa are laid. The confreres in formation have the delicate task of conveying to the young people who come from different backgrounds in our Society's spirit. These are young people who are a product of their time.

What challenges do the formators face, and what are their hopes for these new generations?

To reassure their formators and all the confreres who laid good foundations for the mission, the young people tell us what attracts them to us and, above all, what makes them want to be missionaries. It is very encouraging to see that Christ continues to speak to young people through our lives and our apostolate. May he make us faithful witnesses of his Gospel

Freddy Kyombo

### Cover :

Mponda Church in Malawi

PHOTO M.AFR. BALAKA

**Burundian proverb:** *"Example is the wife of the word; one cannot beget without the other."*

**Meaning:** The coherence between what a person lives and what he professes. We witness with our lives.

# Formation at the service of the mission

As part of our journey towards the Jubilee Year, the Petit Echo devoted an issue of 2018, No. 1087, to initial formation. This allowed some formators to share their experiences with us. In the editorial of that issue, which I entitled “Our initial formation 150years on since Our Foundation”, I presented a general picture of our formation system, divided into four phases. I would like to borrow the words of Father Dominique Arnauld, former Secretary for Initial Formation, to define this particular phase. In his first letter as secretary to formators and candidates in July 2003, he shared his vision of our formation, and this is what he wrote about the first phase: “The first phase, according to me, corresponds to the Gospel according to Saint Mark. It is the time of attachment to Jesus, having heard his call, your name pronounced, the “come, follow me” and your awareness: “Yes, this is the Son of God”. It is a time of self-discovery, of God’s magnificent plan for humanity, of Christ’s call to you to follow him. You hear this call through the Society of M. Afr., disciples like yourself, and whose story you are trying to learn.

According to him, our formation system is inspired by the dynamic proposed by the Gospels and each phase is identified with one of the

Gospels. The Gospel of St. Mark teaches us to follow Christ. We discover different calls for different missions. The first chapter recounts the call of Simon and Andrew (Mk 1:17); the second chapter features the call of Levi (Mk 2:14). Mark, however, differentiates between the two accounts of these calls marked by the spontaneity, availability and generosity of those called

**Didier Sawadogo**  
Assistant général





in responding to the invitation and the account of the call of the rich young man in chapter 10:21-22. The latter is so full of self-righteousness that he is unable to renounce his wealth to follow Jesus.

The young people who approach us in response to the call they have felt are from different backgrounds, and from different religious life experiences. They arrive in our centers of formation carrying with them their dream, and one of the objectives of the first phase is to help them verify if their dream corresponds to God's plan for them. It is about accompanying them to freely discern God's will for them. This means helping them to welcome his love, to be challenged like the rich young man and to hear in the silence of their hearts the invitation of Jesus to be open to the will of his Father for them. It is also a place for forming one's personal identity and the sense of belonging to the Society in the encounter between the Society's charism and the search of the young man's own charism. One fundamental aspect of formation is to verify whether the candidate's development and affirmation of his charism are in harmony with the Institute's charism. The Society takes formation seriously and invests a great deal, both in structures and personnel, to help young candidates respond to the Lord's call.

### **The present situation**

We have eleven first phase formation houses throughout the world, ten of which are functional. Of course, since the first phase formation takes place in the province of origin, each province or section has a formation house. Unfortunately, the house of formation of the EPO section in Adigrat is temporarily closed for various reasons. Both candidates of the section are in Jinja, the formation house of the Eastern Africa Province. The Central Africa Province (PAC) has two centres: Ruzizi in Bukavu and Kimbondo in Kinshasa; in Ouagadougou, there is Maison Lavigerie for the Western Africa Province (PAO), in Ejisu for the Ghana/Nigeria Province; in Balaka for the Southern Africa Province (SAP); in Lublin for the Province of Europe (PEP); in Bangalore, India and Cebu, Philippines for the Section of Asia (SOA); in Guadalajara for the Province of the Americas (AMS).

In this issue, we shall focus on these centres. Formators and candidates share with us their life and mission.



Father Jean-Jacques, the rector of Ruzizi, shares his joys and challenges as a formator. He gives us a glimpse of the immense responsibility involved in the ministry of formation as well as the nobility and sensitivity of his task, forming individuals to responsible freedom. Father Prosper Harelimana is a formator in Ejisu, Ghana. He also talks about his joys as a formator and, more importantly, about the challenges of formation in a post-modern context. He cites, among other challenges, digital communication, the competitive spirit in a materialistic society, ethnic, national and international conflicts, the lack of role models to follow and imitate, and the pandemic. In such a context, what training should future pastors receive? Find out some possible ways forward in his article.

We also have candidates from Cebu to Ouagadougou via Kinshasa, sharing with us about their life in formation. Finally, Bernard Ugeux shares his testimony on the impact of ministry integrity in our pastoral work. We may be tempted to look for the link between this article and the theme of this issue of the *Petit écho*, which is devoted to formation. The answer is that formation is at the service of mission and that integrity of life is an ongoing issue for all. We hope that, after a number of years in formation, we will have confreres who are available, generous, flexible, joyful, and of integrity who will make our communities and missions safe places for all.

Wherever we may be let us accompany our young people in formation by our fraternal prayer, and may the Lord give us many holy vocations.

Didier Sawadogo, Assistant General



## First appointments of young confreres

	Surname	First & Middle names	Country of Origin	Mission
1.	Akunga	Calvin	Kenya	(2) MAGH
2.	Somboro	Vincent	Mali	
3.	Bahati	Janvier	RDC	(6) EAP
4.	Iranzi	Innocent	RDC	
5.	Br. Mwansa	Rodgers	Zambia	
6.	Nare	Mohamadi	Burkina	
7.	Niyonzima	Emmanuel	Burundi	
8.	Mugenyi	Dhenga Justin	RDC	
9.	Mare	Pascal	Burkina	(3) SAP
10.	Matata	Innocent	RDC	
11.	Kambale	Augustin	RDC	
12.	Cebuluzi	Pierre	RDC	(6) PAO
13.	Kabongo	Katanga Gérard	RDC	
14.	Ijege	Peter	Nigeria	
15.	Paipi	Paul	Malawi	
16.	Mwapoteki	Joseph	Tanzania	
17.	Ndagijimana	Lazare	Rwanda	
18.	Meda	Jean de Dieu	Burkina	(4) PAC
19.	Aondoer	Cyprian Chia	Nigeria	
20.	Mutekanga	Major	Ouganda	
21.	Gumanoshaba	Paul	Ouganda	
22.	Cimanuka	Patient	RDC	(4) GhN
23.	Sawadogo	Charles	Burkina	
24.	Bashombana	Jean-Pierre	RDC	
25.	Lulenga	Jean-Claude	RDC	
26.	Uzele	Jean-Baptiste	RDC	(1) PEP
27.	Gachoki	John	Kenya	(1) EPO

Robert Beyuo Tebri, Secretary for Initial Formation

# Mission in a House of Formation



I see my mission as a formator is an incredibly delicate task because it deals with a vocation called to grow; delicate also because it involves our missionary Society's future. It is a question of providing the Society with persons consecrated to Christ for the mission in Africa and the African world. It is a service that requires a great deal of listening, patience, and above all, trust in the action of the Spirit.

During my own formation journey, I had formators who trusted me and patiently introduced me to missionary life; I am called in my turn to trust the youth of today. My mission is to listen to them, their doubts and hopes, and foster an atmosphere conducive to vocational discernment, both for the staff and the young people themselves.

Many young men come to us with a deep and sincere desire, sometimes coloured by illusions. Our task is to help them discover the demands of an authentic and fulfilling life as a Missionary of Africa, through what our formation process proposes, as expressed in the diverse activities of the formation community.

## The joys of this mission

I am delighted to see that there are still young people, especially in Africa, drawn by our charism, enthusiastic about what we are living: in-



## MISSION

tercultural community life, openness to other religions, the apostolate in peripheral areas, etc. All of this comforts me in the choice I have made in my life. I am grateful to God and delighted to see that our charism responds to the needs of the present day. Life as a Missionary of Africa gives meaning to these young people of our time.

I also feel joy being part of a team united around a formation project in which everyone participates. The exercise of community discernment of a missionary vocation is difficult when carried out alone, but easier when exercised together with others in faith. Unanimity is a clear mani-



The Ruzizi chapel at Bukavu

festation of the Spirit when deciding on another person's vocation. And when it is clear enough for both the candidate and the team of formators to stop the candidate's formation, all we can do is, in spite of a twinge of regret, give thanks to God for the journey taken together.

After three years at La Ruzizi, I am impressed to see in some of our candidates their human and spiritual growth and how their vocation has matured. We see them increasingly fulfilled and happy to give themselves fully to the missionary adventure. It is truly a cause for joy to witness the growth of a vocation.

## **The challenges of mission in a house of formation**

The candidates, even if they are subject to the same expectations, do not always respond in the same way. While some are quick to see what they are called to do, others need time. The challenge is to ensure that, in the general running of the house, each of the candidates devotes himself to what is his journey. It is possible to guide each one in this by relying on the common activities.

The atmosphere here is typical of a M. Afr. formation house: prayer, meetings, recreation, study, work, welcome, simplicity in relationships, in short, a fraternity that many young people coming to us find attractive. I am ever more convinced, especially here in the first phase, that there is a real need for a role model not from outside appearances but from inner convictions. The candidates perceive, beyond our limits, or as we say here, “the shortcomings in our qualities”, the efforts that we make, on the path of holiness, like them, with them and for them, in order to transmit to them the “missionary of Africa spirit”. They are marked by simple gestures of welcome, listening and accompaniment.

It is a formation in responsible freedom whereby the young person can discern the demands of missionary life for himself and act responsibly in a given situation. To allow for an adhesion, even a personal conviction, of each student, to a community activity after a community discernment (community meeting). Even if sometimes, at this stage, certain activities may be required for the common good, a great deal of patience is needed to facilitate the personal discernment of the candidate.

Sometimes there are doubts or even resistance from some candidates to specific decisions made by the staff. Therefore, the challenge is to maintain the balance between the compulsory dimension of the formation (the non-negotiable aptitudes and behavior) and the candidate’s freedom, which allows him to discern. Here then, in a few lines, without being exhaustive are the joys and challenges we share with our future confreres.

Jean Jacques Mukanga



# Humps on the road to reach the destination



When I was on stage at NkhataBay parish in Malawi, according to the system of the initial formation, I came across for the first time a set of humps at the cross road. I reflected several times about its purpose. On our journey to reach our destination we might have noticed humps on the road. They are laid on the road with the purpose so that the driver slows down the speed of the vehicle. The driver realizes that they are laid at dangerous places of the road and he takes great responsibility to drive with extra care in order to save his own life, the lives of sojourners and the lives of many pedestrians who, for various reasons, cross the road on a daily basis. The humps remind the driver that he has to reach the destination safe and sound.

I make an application of this analogy in my journey of the priesthood and live my mission in the house of formation for the greater glory of God. I am convinced that the First Phase Formation Centre in Bangalore (India) is laid like the humps on our vocation journey to transform one self and many young candidates for the African world. Sincerely speaking, on this journey of the priesthood as a priest and formator, there are humps in carrying out the mission entrusted to me in the house of formation. I become lukewarm in mission sometimes but there is also



so much of enthusiasm, where I never felt alone but in the presence of Jesus.

It is very evident that the First Phase Formation is very important in the initial formation system of the Missionaries of Africa. I am convinced that the first phase formation centres in our society at various places are established with careful consideration to actualise the mission of the greater glory of God. The first phase formation centre in India is established and laid like the humps on the road to achieve the mission. The first phase formation centre is the place where relationship between God and all those that are called to develop with uncertainties and doubts at the start, to slowly move towards total surrender before God. Without making a fuss I would say concretely that this is the place, where I learn to liberate myself from physical, psychological, political, social and spiritual bondages. I am accompanied by Jesus the formator, therefore the vocation to accompany our candidates and aspirants is the action of Jesus and this is my conviction.

Mission – “Focus in Africa” – Every evening we (M.Afr.) confreres watch the BBC news and we all like to watch the special edition of the news that is “focus in Africa.” This is my fifth year being away from Africa and I am here in India working for Africa by accompanying the young candidates as a formator. Many generous young men from India are ready to live and work with our brothers and sisters in Africa realizing that we are all the children of God “this is my mission in the First Phase centre in India”. I preach and teach the candidates about the goodness of Africa that through our missionary work the beauty and the hidden treasure in the surface of the earth that is “Africa” be discovered. This is exactly our founder Cardinal Lavignerie told us to do.

Through our ministry of vocation promotion hundreds of families know about the goodness of Africa. By visiting the various parishes and attending the ordinations of our confreres in different states of the sub-continent India, thousands of Christians and non Christians know the goodness of Africa. Many people have prejudices about Africa as they see the negativity in television, by listening to me and other confreres many are able to let go of their prejudices. This is how I live my missionary life and because of this mission I never feel that I am detached from



## MISSION

Africa. Two terms of my priestly ministry in two different parishes in the country of Malawi (Africa) with very good experiences continues to echo in my mind “Africa is Calling” (This Phrase is the heading for vocation Animation in India).

Joys of Inheriting and Passing on the Legacy – I was once a student at the same First Phase Formation Centre and I never dreamt of



Formators and students of S.O.L.A. Study House in Bengaluru

becoming a Formator over here. I look back on the past with gratitude and I rejoice for I have inherited the legacy of the missionary spirit from veteran Formators those who served in India. I rejoice that I have inherited the legacy of missionary commitment from confreres who inspire and motivate me to pass on the rich legacies to the many candidates. I rejoice because I see the rays of hope that many generous young men join us but I constantly remind our candidates that our journey will be futile without passing through the humps on the road to reach the destination (Africa). I rejoice that Bishops of various dioceses in India welcome us to be fishers of men for the sake of beloved Africa.

Challenges in communicating the Missionary Spirit to the Young Candidates – I must acknowledge that, to be an ideal formator it needs

a lot of self scarifies and self discipline to impart the missionary spirit on to the candidates. For those who followed Jesus it was not merely moving towards him physically, but rather it was a deliberate “ leaving behind” in order to be with him. Am I practicing the “chosen and set-apart” method of discipleship? This is indeed a challenge for me. What is truly challenging is that in order to transform candidates, first of all I should be a transformed person, in order to liberate I should be liberated.



“S.O.L.A. Study House” in Bengaluru

I always teach about the beauty of our intercultural and international community life but it is not actualized here in our centre and this is a great challenge. Challenges cannot lead us to pessimism because we are assured of the covenant of Jesus with us “Remember that I am with you always till the end of time”.

Filiyanus Ekka

# Missionary formation in a post-modern world



I choose to write this article with joy and enthusiasm, but not without fear. With joy and enthusiasm because being a missionary priest, and a formator gives joy and eagerness. With fear, because being a formator in our post-modern world is not easy. This article will be presented in a threefold pattern: joy of being a formator in Ejisu, Ashanti, Ghana; challenges of our missionary formation program, and remedies for a solid missionary formation.

## **Joy of being a formator in Ejisu, Ashanti, Ghana**

It is always elating to see young men expressing a deep desire of serving God and humanity as missionary priests and brothers. It gives hope, opens new horizons, and offers various possibilities to us – the Missionaries of Africa and to the Church when young people still want to live a life totally dedicated to God and humanity. I live and see the dream of Cardinal Charles Lavigerie progressively unfolding itself in the life of younger generations. The charism of our Society has a future. We are fully alive. Being fully alive comes with a great responsibility – to train and shape the lives of young men who wholeheartedly choose to join us in view of becoming missionaries.

Joy in formation work springs from various sources. The first one is the person of Jesus Christ. Christ calls and trains his disciples. He calls them to eventually hand over to them what he received from the Father – the Mission of love and compassion. Prior to the great commissioning, Christ's disciples must listen to him, learn to do what he does, listen to people, learn to accommodate people from all walks of life, and to accept to suffer for the other. For this reason, Christ occupies an important place in our formation program. Daily celebration of the Eucharist becomes a proper medium to concretely taste the joy that comes from Christ. His Word, Body and Blood nourish us.



Prosper and students in Ejisu

The second source of joy is the formation process in-itself. To see our young brothers maturing according to the five pillars of our formation program – human, spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic formation coupled with community living gives joy. Our formation program is holistic, i.e., it considers the person as whole. It allows candidates to unveil their talents and blossom. The third source is teaching Philosophy. Reading Philosophy gives room to knowing and understanding myself, shaping and giving direction to my own life. Philosophy also allows me to understand how the world is, how it works and how it should work.



Philosophy purges and solidifies my faith. Reading coupled with teaching Philosophy gives me joy when I see our young brothers gradually mature as they develop their intellect.

### Challenges of our Missionary Formation Program

Our candidates come from two countries: Ghana and Nigeria. In general, our candidates emerge from a similar society. (1) A society which is advancing technologically, but fluid in nature – mobiles and smart phones with all its new apps, internet, and computers foster easy access and sharing of information but promote a culture that does not value reading classical texts in hard copies. Facebook culture is slowly becoming a point of reference even for serious academic work. (2) A vulnerable society struggling with Covid-19, shifting ethical, cultural, and religious values, i.e., it lacks moral reality that can serve as a plumbline to morally guide people. (3) A competitive society marked with a lack of caring for one another, i.e., a materialist and consumerist society that gives priority to immediate gratification. (4) A society bruised by tribal, ethnic, national, and international conflicts – a society that needs to be reconciled with itself. (5) A society that lacks role models to look up to – sometimes



Prosper with other Ejisu students

our candidates identify themselves with people who are not morally forthright, etc. Such a society for sure defines and affects the quality of candidates enrolled in our formation program. These are the challenges of our formation program. They render it unhealthy. Hence, the need to find an antidote.

### **Remedies for a solid Missionary Formation**

To face up to these difficulties, we propose a two-fold antidote: first, having a good selection of candidates, i.e., have well defined and clear criteria for admission; to have a careful preparation of candidates before admission. A hasty admission of candidates stands as hindrance to the whole process of formation. Missionary motivation of our candidates should be made clear at earlier stage. We need men of faith, who love God and humanity. Second, a presence of human and zealous formators. Who is a formator? Is he a ‘CCTV camera controller’ who is always on the lookout to catch a candidate who errs? I do not think so! A formator is a man of faith and prayer, with a high degree of self-awareness. He is a man who loves the Society’s charism. Such a man will help candidates to grow in view of becoming good and happy missionaries, available for God and humanity.

To conclude, Missionary Formation in a post-modern world is ‘must-do’ work, not only for selected confreres, but for all Missionaries of Africa. We all have a great responsibility to educate and nurture future missionaries if we really want Lavignerie’s dream for Africa to continue. Are you ready to contribute for the success of this noble task?

Prosper Harelimana



# Training young people to become compassionate missionaries and not bosses

EJISU-GHANA



If there is something that we can boast about as Missionaries of Africa it is indeed our formation programme. It is one of the best programmes one can think of. Even those who pull out of it usually bear witness to this fact. No wonder most of our ex-candidates become successful people in their respective societies. Our formation programme attempts to touch almost all aspects of life. It puts the accent on freedom and responsibility. Without freedom there is no growth. Without responsibility there is no maturity. There is thus a necessary correlation between freedom and responsibility. Our formation programme aims at producing sound missionaries equipped with spiritual, intellectual and human values. Certainly, it has its own loopholes. Sometimes the outcome contra-



dicts our expectations. Instead of coming up with simple and dedicated young men, we end up having bosses and rather indifferent characters. Instead of producing down-to-earth and compassionate missionaries, we end up having speculators and those with a pharisaic temperament. Nevertheless, the undesirable outcome of our formation programme cannot outweigh the positive results we experience today. We certainly have enough reasons to rejoice in the Lord for the increasing number of vocations and for the apostolic zeal and devotedness of our confreres both young and old. There is something in us that is generally admired by others, especially the local Church. Could it be our simple life style or our closeness with the people we are sent to?

When I arrived in our formation house in Ejisu-Ghana after serving in our respective formation houses of Cebu-Philippines and Balaka-Malawi, I somehow shocked some candidates when I frankly told them that I was also undergoing formation like them. I went further to tell my team members that I had not come to teach them anything, but rather to simply accompany them on their vocational journey. I wanted them to realise that life is a journey, not a destination, and that we are all brothers called to accompany and help one another to become better Christians and missionaries each and every day. Also, I wanted our candidates to realise that as a formator I am not there to tell them what to do or to impart my knowledge to them, but rather to help them to bring out the best of themselves. This is precisely one of the challenging aspects of formation on the side of the formator.

In my prayerful mode I often ask myself: How can I help these young men entrusted to me to become spiritually, intellectually and humanly apt to face the challenges of this constantly changing world? How can I instill in them our charism as Missionaries of Africa? How can I help them to become Christocentric in their thoughts, words, and actions? I must admit that these questions challenge me as well. One cannot give what one does not have. Can a blind man accurately lead another? (Luke 6:39). Certainly not! This is precisely why on-going formation is paramount for us formators.

Another challenging aspect of formation is when I am faced with a candidate who is incredibly endowed with human and pastoral aptitudes,

but academically weak. It has always made me uncomfortable to see potential missionaries being asked to quit formation because of academic reasons. Certainly, the world we are living in requires a certain level of intellectual tenacity, the reason why some candidates are left out. But could we not do something [which I cannot figure out at this moment] to include such candidates in our Mission if they so wish?

A concern has been raised about an increasing tendency among us towards clericalism and what I have termed “bossism.” Some of our can-



Formators and students at the first phase of Cebu

didates and young confreres seem not to be ready to “get their hands dirty.” (See G.C., Rome, 28th December 2020). This concern has been working on me. The unreadiness to get one’s hands dirty is no doubt a pharisaic attitude. How can we help our candidates to shun away from this tendency? Without claiming to offer a solution, I wish to humbly propose what I may term Ubuntu-centred formation. Its values, as we shall see, are not new to most of us. But I guess a critical analysis of it might draw out attention to something significant in the formation of our candidates.

An Ubuntu-centered formation describes a mode of formation that aims at bringing out the humane (Ubuntu) in a person. The humane in a person expresses itself in a number of humanistic and spiritual values such as love, compassion, commitment, benevolence, understanding, hospitality, forgiveness, solidarity, etc. This approach to formation stems from the conviction that we, human beings, whether we are immature or ferocious, are fundamentally endowed by God with an inherent goodness (Ubuntu) which, when carefully tapped, can bring about positive vibes in our own lives and the lives of others. The term Ubuntu is borrowed from the Bantu languages of eastern, central and southern Africa. These languages hinge on the word ntu to designate a human being (umuntu or omuntu). From a practical perspective, Ubuntu describes an inherent-impulse-for-responsibility or a compassionate attitude towards others, especially the suffering. It designates a “spiritual power” or a mode of existence that characterises what many consider as the essence of what it means to be truly human.

An Ubuntu-spirited person cannot remain indifferent when injustice or atrocities are being committed against innocent people. One may say, for instance, that it was the spirit of Ubuntu – a compassionate impulse from within – that compelled our founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, to strongly and tirelessly fight against the evil of human slavery in Africa. Also, in His ministry, Jesus was always moved by compassion, be it in feeding the hungry (Mt 15:34), in raising the dead (Luke 7:13) or in healing the sick (Mt 14:14). Perhaps, one of the best examples on how an Ubuntu-spirited person can readily “get his hands dirty” is presented in the Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29- 37). When the Good Samaritan saw the victim of banditry, he was moved by compassion and spontaneously took pity on him, while the clerics or bosses of the time – the priest and the Levite – simply “passed by on the other side.”

As formators, is it not our task to create an environment that allows our candidates to be in touch with their inner-selves and nurture that compassionate impulse, that inherent-impulse-for-responsibility? I firmly believe that if I am truly in touch with the humane in me, the essence of my being human (Ubuntu), I will spontaneously “get my hands



Bonaventure and some students at Ejisu.

dirty” in carrying out the Mission that has been entrusted to me. We are tremendously blessed with generous and gifted candidates. If only we could enable them to become compassionate missionaries and not bosses.

Bonaventure B. Gubazire

# Saint Joseph Mukasa Missionary Formation Centre Kimbondo



Formators and students of the 1st phase of Kimbondo in Kinshasa

## **What attracts us Missionary of Africa students, and what inspires us to be missionaries.**

Revisiting the things that attract us to the Missionaries of Africa and inspire us to become missionaries is a subtle exercise of recalling and updating our different vocational motivations. From this perspective, we sought the points of view of each and every one of us to ensure that our response is properly expressed. As an Institute of Apostolic Life, the Society of the Missionaries of Africa corresponds to our desire to serve Christ. This is thanks to the multiple characteristics that attracted us to its members, which we present in the following lines.



We did not know much about the Society of Missionaries of Africa before entering formation. However, we see some of the aspects that attracted us becoming more concrete during our formation.

### **Community life, lifestyle, apostolate and prayer life**

The international and intercultural community helps us to move beyond a self-centered approach to a more community minded way of



The chapel of St Joseph Mukasa in Kimbondo, Kinshasa

living. Community life allows everyone to live with each other in mutual understanding and fraternal love. This experience enables us to understand that the individual is not self-sufficient.

We are not indifferent to the simple lifestyle evident in the missionaries of Africa in general and among our formators in particular. We see this lifestyle manifested in their closeness to all categories of people, a living sign of Christ's action, humble and poor. It is this feature that makes them open to various forms of the apostolate.

The Missionaries of Africa have a particular concern for the vulnerable, the needy, the destitute, the sick, the oppressed, the prisoners, etc. Such an apostolic life constitutes a significant factor in reminding us of the original vivacity of being Missionaries of Africa. Indeed, this type of apostolate is the specificity of the Missionaries of Africa. The Mis-

sionaries of Africa, in their simplicity, have a deep attachment to a real life of prayer. It is nourished through liturgical celebrations and spiritual exercises such as recollections, retreats, etc.

### Other elements

Furthermore, considering why we want to become Missionaries of Africa, in the first place we see primary evangelization. This apostolic aspect of the Society nourishes our desire to ardently continue such work. As Cardinal Lavigerie stated: “Be apostles and nothing else”, we see that the Missionaries of Africa are faithful to their Founder’s call. Without being distracted by the beauty of Africa they fulfill their mission with courage and passion whilst being attached to the person of Christ from whom they draw all their strength. Such is our dream of being, one day, apostles like them.

Secondly, the work for justice and peace give us the desire to respond to the needs of populations that have been torn apart by injustice, marginalization, crime, war and many other forms of suffering by witnessing to them the love of God who never abandons his own. The missionaries of Africa seek to restore man’s dignity as being created in the image and likeness of God.

And finally, we would like to mention inter-religious dialogue, especially with Muslims. This dialogue is one of the characteristics of the missionaries of Africa in the universal Church.

Therefore, we, student missionaries of Africa, upon outlining the aspects that attract us and make us want to be missionaries of Africa, have realized that our desire to be apostles is based on the Society’s charism. As stated and underlined in the previous paragraphs, the positive witness of our predecessors gives us a taste for missionary life and affirms the steps we take on our missionary journey, following Christ, our master and model. It is with great joy that we share what attracts us and what gives us the desire to be missionaries.

By a group of students  
from the Kimbondo, Kinshasa Formation Centre.



# From Maison Lavigerie in Ouagadougou, students testify



We are drawn to the Society of Missionaries of Africa and are motivated to commit ourselves because its charism centers on several exciting parameters.

We see such an attraction in many a young Catholic who sees a priest adorned in liturgical vestments and wants to be like him. However, for the Missionaries of Africa, such vestments are to be discovered in their “simple lifestyle”. Barthélémy Sawadogo testifies: “Since I met the Missionaries of Africa, what has always struck me is their simple lifestyle”.

This lifestyle, which we experience in the first phase of formation, makes us want to deepen our desire to be Missionaries of Africa one day. The missionaries, fathers and brothers, by dressing simply, make themselves closer to those around them. Blaise Bakouyouu remarks: “I like to see a Missionary of Africa with the rosary round his neck, often on top of his Alb during a celebration. This is one way of showing that he allows Mary, Our Lady of Africa, a place in his mission”.

## Welcoming

Something else that catches our attention when we consider joining the Missionaries of Africa is their welcome. Indeed, the warm welcome we received from the Missionaries of Africa during our first contacts was very encouraging. It is worth mentioning. Thus Fulgence Sanou testifies: “The welcome is often decisive and encourages us to choose this path. Indeed, aspirants, during the first encounters, be it on the phone or personally, are touched by the respect shown to them. One listens to them, shows interest in their progress and encourages them.”



Chapel of the Maison Lavigerie in Ouagadougou

The first encounters with the Missionaries of Africa are joyful and informal. Fulgence Sanou explains: “I went to meet Father Sosthène Palm, at the time in charge of vocational animation in Bobo-Dioulasso, the first time, after a short phone call. It was truly fraternal. Fr. Palm rushed to meet me downstairs, and we met each other on the stairs. He took my bag as one does for a friend. He was cheerful, welcoming and attentive. From that moment on, I felt really welcomed, and I said to myself: I would like to join this community where I feel at ease.”

## Community life

Community life is another thing that attracted us. It is an essential aspect of life among the Missionaries of Africa. Without any formality the formators in the community share their meals with us, young people. They are also present during community recreation and take part in various games. What simplicity! This makes the formators very close to us, according to Barthelemy Sawadogo. Thus, Blaise Bakouyoou recounts his own experience: “ Every experience during this first phase of formation is very enriching for me. There is always something new to learn and to share in the community. I find the joy of living in an international and intercultural community, where I always learn from the experience of others”.

## Apostolic life

Another aspect of the charism of the Missionaries of Africa that appeals to us is the apostolic life. The appointments for apostolic activities



Fulgence Sanou (3rd year), Blaise Bakouyoou (3rd year)  
and Sawadogo Barthelemy (2nd year)



in the first year of formation prepare us to become authentic apostles. Therefore, working alongside rejected or sick people, being with young people, is about being close to everyone, just as the Founder wished. This is the famous “All to all”.

Barthélémy Sawadogo testifies to this apostolic aspect: “ It enables me to grasp the hard realities all these people have to cope with”. Our apostolate bears witness to the missionary’s total gift to leave his country for other horizons, to leave self behind. This is being lived among us in our community, between formators and ourselves and the candidates from different nationalities and cultures. Like Christ’s apostles, the missionaries make themselves available to embrace other cultures and learn other languages. In reality, they live this free and universal love proposed by Christ.

In short, the charism of the Missionaries of Africa is life and mystery, dedication, commitment and service. Blaise Bakouyouu adds with conviction: “I have found in the Missionaries of Africa the model of the consecrated man I wish to become”. In fact, hospitality, community life and the apostolate are all expressions of the way to live a simple community lifestyle. According to Fulgence Sanou, “to be a missionary is living a life of service everywhere. We are truly missionary when we keep to a simple lifestyle. Finally, international and intercultural community life is one of the particularities of the Missionaries of Africa from the outset. It is a great richness. Barthélémy Sawadogo believes that it should be kept as a valuable treasure. We must put all our efforts into ensuring that we do not lose these values, which are so characteristic of the Society we form when we become Missionaries of Africa.

Fulgence Sanou,  
Blaise Bakouyouu  
and Barthelemy Sawadogo



# Life in the Cebu Formation Community



As candidates of our Society, we came to the formation centre in Cebu, the Philippines, neither by accident nor because we were forced to come. We came willingly to join the community, to learn about missionary life and to discern our vocation. Here, we have the privilege to study Philosophy at the University of San Carlos, but more importantly, we have the time and space to reflect upon our vocation and how God is calling us to serve him. Our presence here is an open invitation for us to live a life that presents both challenges and possibilities. All of this takes place within a loving, caring community.

Our Philosophy courses at the University of San Carlos help us to think about the world differently and from different perspectives. Through Philosophy, we are invited to journey on the search for knowledge, not only to fill our minds, but to help us to build a strong foundation in life, seeking answers to questions. Our in-house sessions on different topics, help us to look deep within ourselves and to reflect upon where we are now and what is going on within us. These sessions help us to ground our philosophical knowledge in concrete situations.



Our pastoral experience at a local leprosarium helps us to build confidence through interacting with the inmates of the centre. We are attracted to our pastoral experience because it reminds us of the kind of the world in which we live, a world that excludes some people. Such experiences draw us closer to the heart of the people, especially those who suffer from leprosy, the abandoned and aged. Our interactions with the inmates help us to gain different perspectives of life and its challenges. Certainly, we are privileged to be in their midst, to listen to them and to share in their life. Such activities of service and generosity help us to deepen our relationship with God.

In our spiritual formation, with the help of our Spiritual Companions and our formators, we are constantly challenged to deepen our relationship with God and with those around me. Our spiritual journey helps us to reflect upon and to clarify our intentions and motivations in order to better discern where God is in our lives at this time.

Our community life is one of brotherhood, with our formators as our elder brothers, always ready to help us and to challenge us to grow emotionally, spiritually and humanly.

We have come to realize that community life is more than a group of people living under the same roof. Community is a place that helps us to better understand those with whom I live and to find ways to transcend the differences between us. Community life challenges us to be flexible and to be able to see things through the eyes of another. Living in community with people of different nationalities, different attitudes and different personal experiences is a great challenge. Through such challenges, we grow not only toward becoming better individuals, but toward being more aware of the people around us, hopefully helping us to be good missionaries in the future.

It is in our normal day-to-day encounters where we really learn what it means to be a missionary today. When our confreres share their personal experiences of missionary life, it helps us to be inspired and to better understand what it means to be a missionary and what it means to live in community.



## MISSION

Our formators guide us whenever we need them. They challenge us and push us because they care for us and want us to progress. They sit with us at table during meals and wash plates with us after the meal.



The Cebu Formation Community in the Philippines

They are with us during recreation. These are simple acts and attitudes that can be easily overlooked, but they are very much appreciated. Our formators work hard, providing us with materials for reflection and discernment. Through all of this, we feel we are not just students passing time here until we move on, but we feel a true sense of belonging within the community, which is, more and more, becoming part of our family.

As students in this community, we feel that we are so lucky to have this kind of formation that treats us as individuals. There are four main things for which we feel thankful. First is the whole formation programme. Second, our formators. Third, the facilities. Fourth the different experiences and opportunities presented to us. When combined together, all of these provide a good formation and we continue to feel attracted because we have all of them.



Students Christian Limpangog and Mark Brigole  
(at Cebu in the Philippines)

Every aspect of our formation programme challenges us to be disciplined and, with the help and guidance from our formators, to take full responsibility for our formation through which we become more confident, as well as widening our perspectives about life, about Africa, about the world, and about the Society of Missionaries of Africa.

Mark Brigole  
Christian Limpangog

# What attracts us to the Missionaries of Africa?



We, M.Afr students at Balaka, would like to reflect and share in this article “what draws us to the Society of the Missionaries of Africa?” . The article will reflect on our attraction to the Charism and Spirituality of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. It will also talk about what gives us the taste to be Missionaries of Africa.

The Society of Missionaries of Africa has its richness in its charism and spirituality. This is not only evident at the present time, but also throughout its history. Evangelization, being one of its charisms is of great enticement to us. Through Primary Evangelization the Gospel reached Africa. We realize that it took first of all Missionaries to leave their home places. Encouraged by the spirituality and charism of the Society, they were ready to encounter many challenges, and some were even killed or died young. This was for the sake of the Gospel and love of Jesus. Until now the Society continues to do evangelization and to be present in places where the Gospel has not yet found strong roots. This spirit of

mission and mobility draws us to the Society. We want also to participate fully in this mission of evangelization wherever our presence is needed.

The Society has taken a vital part in the mission of the Church concerning inter religious dialogue. In this regard, we are attracted by its commitment towards the promotion of peace. Generally our experience tells us that, in our various home countries, we have witnessed a continuous strife among various religious beliefs. For this, the Missionaries



Reading the Word of God at a Eucharistic celebration

of Africa have been a good model for us. We want also to participate in this kind of dialogue on the basis of promoting peace in the world. We are sure that this is what Christ came for, among other things.

Injustice, oppression of the poor and other social problems are common in our contemporary world. The Missionaries of Africa however, have taken part in fighting against various forms of injustices based on the recognition of human dignity. This comes out clearly in what is called the fight for 'peace and justice'. We find it very attractive. We realize that it is a fundamental mission that Jesus began and left with the Church in which the Society takes part. The Society has overtime contributed positively to the restoration of human dignity in various societies. As future members of Missionaries of Africa, we want to use our energy in taking part in this mission.

We are also enticed by the way of life of the Missionaries of Africa, seeing how their way of life is fundamentally rooted in imitating Jesus Christ. This begins with the aspect of prayer which is considered first, as Cardinal Lavigerie emphasized “be men of prayer”. Their Common prayers also signify unity and oneness as the founder stressed “be not



Prayer in the Chapel in Balaka

only united but one”. It also precedes some phrases that give a guide to their life such as “be Apostles nothing but Apostles” and “be all things to all men”. Their way of life inspired by these phrases are points by which we are also drawn to the M.Afr.

Community life lived by the Missionaries of Africa has our great admiration. Community life puts the Missionaries of Africa to live and to work in harmony. We are attracted by their collaboration in pastoral work, running projects, meetings and planning. This life, testifies to the Gospel values in action and to ‘Unity in diversity’. This diversity is expressed in living an intercultural and international community life.



Erasto Shayo (left) with students on a team excursion

Missionaries of Africa have a remarkable pastoral life. We are lured by the way they are present among people whom they serve and how they serve them. This entails their simple life style and flexibility. They identify themselves with the people among whom they are living and to whom they are rendering service. Adapting to the local environment, learning new languages, respecting the local culture and good relationships with the local churches are strong points of attraction.

Our formation house program includes daily mass, monthly recollection, pastoral work, living in teams, manual work, to mention but a few. The experience of this diversity gives us an opportunity to encounter new social and cultural phenomena. In encountering new people in pastoral work we learn to be open, learn new things from others and experience God in others, in a unique way. This among other things gives us the 'taste' of being Missionaries of Africa.

Students (2021), Lechaptois Formation House, Balaka, Malawi.



# The effects of Integrity of Ministry on Pastoral Work.

**A cultural change that will require time**



I have been asked to contribute my views on how different confreres perceive the integrity of the ministry on the ground. This would require a fact-finding exercise with each confrere so as not to limit myself to subjective impressions and not be an outside observer without any way of perceiving just what the confreres experience in this area. In fact, as we shall see it is a subject that is rarely addressed. In any case, if there were a survey, I am afraid that only about 10% of our confreres would have responded.

## **A difficult evaluation to carry out.**

I can only provide impressions of the impact of the invitation to a particular behaviour and how it is experienced, based on my usual contacts with different confreres in different places during my formation sessions that I have had and my different encounters with confreres. In other words, this is more of a testimony than a report, which is therefore

relative! In general, however, I think we avoid scrutinizing the behavior of confreres in their relationships with minors and vulnerable people, especially young girls, women and sisters. In my opinion, this discretion is due to a willingness to be (too?) discreet about confreres' private life despite actual temptations. Nonetheless, in specific communities, allusions can be made to questionable behavior. These are rarely dealt with directly, though sometimes in the form of humour. Such a situation makes it difficult to evaluate how confreres consider the guidance given about integrity in ministry in their behaviour.

### **Discreet but well-targeted achievements.**

It doesn't mean that we have nothing to report in this respect. Having given several sessions on the subject either with Stéphane Joulain (Ouagadougou, Nairobi) or in a personal capacity, either with Missionaries of Africa or social workers, I feel concerned about how participants of these sessions have applied it in pastoral work or their usual conversations on the subject.

For instance, I noticed that some confreres in my province have tried to spread the information or the training they received. A confrere wrote a very long article in which he describes in detail the training he received. Another, who works in a parish, is involved in raising awareness among teachers, in training youth leaders, or attending court cases in proven abuse cases, etc. There have also been one or two inputs in houses of initial formation. There are undoubtedly many other initiatives in other Provinces that are worth mentioning.

Perhaps the most crucial moment was when all confreres in the different sectors were asked to sign a document committing themselves to the protection of minors. Therefore, the topic was officially raised, and most of the confreres complied. A short training session on the subject was given, differing from one sector to another. In mine, the introduction was mainly from a legal or canonical point of view, and the suffering of both victims and predators was not addressed. I wanted to share my interpretation of the term "vulnerable adult". I wanted to extend it to young girls and that of women or nuns with personal problems. This is because of how women are treated in certain African cultures, and the clergy's



attitudes in specific dioceses have had harmful effects, among others, on religious sisters.

### **An outdated subject?**

I feel that having been involved in ongoing formation for quite a few years; there are cycles or fashions according to specific periods in our society's history. Looking back over the past few decades, I observed how we can be taken up by one enthusiastic issue (development/adventure) after another (it was good to dig wells, launch cooperatives, etc.). In the 1980s, I attended several sessions on the subject without any significant impact on our pastoral practice. Lately, there were talks of integrity (with a lesser effect as far as ecology is concerned). Nowadays, it is more a question of accounting, management, and the setting up of income-generating projects (the beneficiaries of which must be clearly defined).

I think this explains in part why the integrity dimension is no longer addressed much today, as though the subject was closed, preferring to be discreet about it. Rather it is when a "case" is mentioned, that the topic is briefly addressed, often with some annoyance about Rome's attitude towards paternity issues. On the question of the abuse of religious Sisters, for example, I have on various occasions suggested that confreres be shown the Arte documentary on the subject. This has impacted both the Pope and the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) and far beyond, but without much success.

### **A gradual change of mentality**

While the picture I present – which is certainly subjective – appears mitigated, we should not underestimate the increased awareness among our confreres, which has had a particular impact on their way of seeing things and their behavior. During the formative sessions, what appeared surprising for many was to discover just how deep the wounds are of a minor that has been abused and the fact that such a person would continue suffering for the rest of his or her life if not treated at some point in time. Another aspect is the precautionary measures with regard to children, for in our pastoral work, we are in contact with youth movements



and many families, and we have had no problem until now with the what we saw as the innocent gestures of affection or the fact of welcoming children into our office. Similarly, in the way our missions were built, our offices, open to all who pass by, led directly to our bedroom at the rear, and this was not perceived as a problem. However, precautionary measures have since been considered. Furthermore, the awareness that is beginning to spread in the Church and society in general about abuse (even if the keeping of silence is still fairly widespread in our local churches), the fact that the UISG asked the Major Superiors not to cover up abuses against their Sisters any longer, as was the case for decades, the last *Motu proprio* of Pope Francis asking that each diocese should provide a safe and confidential place where complaints could be made, should be seen as an invitation or a warning to us all. I believe many of us realise that we have a responsibility to bear witness. It is now becoming increasingly risky to violate certain prohibitions or laws. This is only the beginning, and I believe that the quality of our prayer and way of living the evangelical counsels, with the help of our community, will positively impact the future of the Church and our Society.

Bernard Ugeux



# Jesus-Christ, today, what for?



In April 2020, Pope Francis uttered a word that made me think: “The coronavirus pushes us to take seriously what is serious”.

Through this coronavirus pandemic, we become aware of our responsibility towards ourselves and our neighbour. It is a call to reflect on who we are, on our values, on our planet, and so on. It is also about thinking of the other person, my next-door neighbour, my neighbour across the street, the other one tends to ignore.

Amid this unexpected storm and being in the same boat, we are invited to row in the same direction. There is a need for us to comfort each other.

It makes me think of the question in the Bible, in Isaiah 6, 8: “Whom shall I send” to comfort the other, the others? I heard someone answering this same question one day: “Here I am, Lord, without delay, without reservation, without going back”.

## **So Jesus Christ today, what for?**

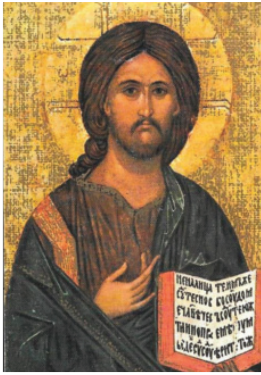
Well, He and He alone teaches us that we belong to the same family of God - a Father who loves us unconditionally and freely. He loved us first. We often think that the primary and fundamental thing in the Christian life is to love God and one's neighbour; this is not true! What is first and fundamental in the Christian life is the beautiful discovery that the God of Jesus Christ loves me first. He loves me as I am today. He loves me all the time and not just me, but the eight and a half billion people on earth.

It is He, Jesus Christ, who in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John repeatedly tells us that God's name is LOVE and that he cannot but be love. "So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16). In his own words St. Paul says the same thing: "Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus". (Phil 3: 7-14).

It is because I have experienced the love of the God of Jesus Christ for me that I can answer today the question: "Whom shall I send?" "Here I am, Lord, without delaying, without reservation and without looking back." It is the gratuitousness of his love that seizes us, that seduces us. It is that which touches our hearts and invites us to respond to his love.

And once we have discovered the deep love that the God of Jesus Christ has for us, today in our lives, then we know why we believe, why we hope, why we love. This gives us something to live for. This gives meaning and direction to our life. It sets our life in motion. It gives us an inner freedom and confidence. It gives us a new lease on life. We have an inner happiness, whatever the storms outside: judgments of others, trials, bad memories, grudges, etc. Inner happiness reveals itself on the outside. Nietzsche was right when he said: "I will believe when Christians look more alive and living more the risen life".

This echoes a comment that a lady made to me after a parish retreat at Lac Bouchette in the diocese of Chicoutimi: "You have a simple and uncomplicated faith. You look happy." This made me smile and feel good.



### The Essential and the Accessories

Faith in Jesus Christ sometimes seems foreign in our modern world. We sometimes feel that we have lost meaning and direction. We wonder if the Church is collapsing. With the rise of all kinds of spiritual trends, religion “à la carte” where everyone chooses the beliefs that suit them, the question is: is it religion or faith that is collapsing? We understand religion as a set of beliefs and practices and faith as a personal decision to follow Jesus Christ. Is it the essential or the accessories that are collapsing?

I like what Madame Marie Gendron wrote about people who suffer from Alzheimer’s disease : “I love these strange people, whose reasoning is unreasonable. They are delinquents of the human comedy. Our hearts don’t suffer from Alzheimer’s. They only capture emotions and forget the event. It grasps the ESSENTIAL and neglects what is ACCESSORY. It feels the falsity of gestures and words, shuns power and looks for tenderness”.

I don’t easily forget the statement made by Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, when he addressed a synodal assembly of 300 bishops in 2001. He said: “The Church speaks too much of itself and not enough of God. Our problem nowadays is that we have emptied the figure of Jesus Christ”. An intervention that was seemingly very much noticed.



By reading and rereading the Word of God in one of the four Gospels every day, and by trying to put it into practice, we gradually discover the person of Jesus Christ: why Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ, who was continually in contact with his father, knew that he was loved. And he helps us to understand what is really important today. It is not money, possession, knowledge, power. It is to know that God and others love us.

We, people of the 21st century, we are not unlike Thomas, who, in a way, encourages us to be critical in our beliefs as he invites us to question, to be able to doubt, to flee half measures. Really! However, we can also fall into a state of excessive doubt, of excessive questioning, and the Lord could tell us: “Stop being unbelievers. Be believers”.

The pertinent questions we ask ourselves are: Why do we live? Who do we live for? What is the point of living? These questions can be answered by focusing on “He who is the Way, the Truth, the Life”. By focusing on “He who passed everywhere doing good and healing” (Acts 10, 38), by trying to resemble him as the beautiful song of Patrice Vallée says: “To resemble you every day a little more, to be you in our houses, in our streets, to be your body that lives again today, in every place where your friends serve”.

The other important thing that Jesus Christ teaches us is that we should do good wherever we go. He went around Galilee, taught in the synagogues, proclaimed the gospel of God’s Kingdom and healed every disease and infirmity in the people. He noticed the widow of Naim and raised her son; he chose his apostles; he noticed the widow putting a few coins in the temple; heard the leper begging to be healed; he condemned the hypocrites; he often withdrew to a lonely place to pray, and so on.

Robert Lebel’s song “Make your house a home” echoes this invitation from Jesus: make your house a hostel that welcomes and receives people, just as they are, without distinction.

I often feel challenged by the following phrase that I read one day, a phrase that I find very beautiful and also very demanding: “Go and give my people an idea of who I am”. This is what Jesus-Christ seems to be saying to me, to us today.

Sr Gaby Lepage, Msola

Henri de La Hougue, *L'Eglise et la diversité des Religions*, Salvator  
– 2020 – 187 pages – € 18.80



In the context of the recent Encyclical “Fratelli Tutti” by Pope Francis, the recent book by Father Henri de La Hougue is truly welcome. This is a very instructive book, easy to use, which we can put into almost any hands. It is presented in a “Question and Answer” format, reminding us of our catechisms. This book could serve as the foundation or basis for a good catechesis in schools or interreligious groups, especially Islamic-Christian ones.

The book seeks to answer the questions that any “common” Christian might ask in the face of the religious plurality in which we are immersed today.

Its opening tends towards biblical references. On page 33, he suggests that there may well be a ‘universal’ Revelation, i.e. not exclusively limited to the Jewish people of Palestine: ‘One can find in the Old Testament, both implicitly and explicitly, traces of a revelation addressed to the whole universe’ (p. 33). He also specifies that Jesus Christ admires not so much the faith of the non-Jews (the pagans) but ‘their capacity to accept his Word’ (p. 36).

His chapter 2 highlights some key moments in the history of the Church, including the famous saying “Outside the Church there is no salvation!” (p.50) He gives an overview of the Second Vatican Council and the decree “Nostra Aetate”. All this started to become real in the no less famous Assisi meetings promoted by John Paul 2, where the unity of the human race was affirmed not necessarily by praying together but by “being together to pray”, each in his way, in his specific place. (p.66)



The third chapter addresses the forms and conditions of dialogue. It explores the different purposes of dialogue, be it a dialogue of life, a dialogue of common projects, a spiritual dialogue, and finally a theological dialogue (p.78-80). However, none of this will happen without a certain amount of sacrifice and perhaps risks that we need to be aware of. The first of such dialogues may deal with our conception of Truth (p.82), which will lead us to discuss God's existence. Yes, which God are we talking about? (p.91). Referring to Islamic-Christian relations, we cannot ignore the whole history of conflict between Muslims and Christians, emphasising differences "at the expense of common elements" (p.99). Finally, is it possible to have inter-religious prayers? Why not? They could take various forms and, above all, will be the fruit of "a process of humility and love before God and before others." (p.103)

The final chapter focuses on some current theological debates. The author argues that interreligious dialogue is not a matter of choice but an obligation, especially when one considers that, numerically, most of the world's population is not Christian (p. 109/110). It isn't easy to summarise the 60 pages of the chapter. We need to understand "the core identity of the Christian faith" (p.121); and realise that sometimes we may face "dead ends" (p.132), "extremely complex" problems (p.143) and even tensions (p.153). Nevertheless, we can make the concluding chapter ours: 'The most powerful witness is often given when the Christian is most at a loss, not knowing what to do or say, but remaining faithful.' (p.162)

In conclusion, Father de La Hougue underlines that his perspective has been to "give a few points of reference and to arouse desire." (p.165). There is no doubt that he has succeeded! For his book is a solid foundation full of points of reference for inter-religious dialogue. It is a book that should be in the libraries of all religious formation houses.

Gilles Mathorel

## Jan Hoogmartens

1932 - 2021

Jan was born on 12 May 1932 in Tongeren, in the province of Limburg. His father taught at the Atheneum until he died in 1947 when Jan was still doing his classical studies at the Notre-Dame College in his hometown. In September 1951, he joined the White Fathers in Boechout. Jan would study theology in Heverlee after his novitiate in Varsenare. On 6 July 1957, he took his missionary oath and was ordained a priest on 6 April 1958. Jan was an enthusiastic and optimistic young man. He was not a great intellectual, but he was very skilled. When it came to manual work, he was at his best. Helpful and generous, he was appreciated in the community. He was a good organizer with a lot of common sense. He was straight forward and so could hurt people from time to time.

After completing what was considered to be military service (which included a much-appreciated course



on tropical diseases), Jan left for Marseille on 1 April 1959 on a motorbike, from where he embarked for Dakar. There he took the train to what was still called the “Apostolic Prefecture of Kayes”, and was appointed to Guene-Gore, 300 km south of Kayes.

The parish at the time, after ten years of existence, had only one baptized person and a group of “sympathizers”. Jan learnt the language, Malinké; there was no language centre yet. The population: ordinary peasants, poor, but open and hospitable. The fathers’ main activity consisted of social work: a dispensary – where Jan spent a lot of time –, schools, horticulture and nurseries. Here his “military service” proved to be very useful. He made many “safaris”, most of them on foot in the mountains. For the first two years, the parish had no vehicles; each confrere had a motorbike and a bicycle. Jan wrote a booklet with the prayers of the Sundays of the



year, followed by a booklet of hymns. The church was built in 1963, and in 1965 Jan was appointed parish priest. He built a boarding school for children from remote villages; the parents paid with grains and groundnuts. The school was conducted in French from the first day. From the start Jan taught the children who didn't go to school to read in their language; to this end, he wrote a booklet not in French, but phonetically and with success. All over small groups started to learn how to read. "I always continued to do literacy classes", noted Jan, "and later I added arithmetic".

In 1970, Jan was appointed to Kassama, on top of the "cliff" but with a milder climate. He started as a curate but became a parish priest in 1974. During his home leave in 1973, Jan registered for lessons in flying. Father Antoine Paulin, the regional superior noted that he dreamed of an airplane for the diocese, but fortunately he gave up the idea. The Sahel at that time was suffering from a terrible drought. He was entrusted with a project aimed at digging wells. He already had experience in this field from Guene-Gore, where a Dutch confrere had initiated such a project. They had a compressor, hammer drills and dynamite at their disposal. Jan had a Dutch collaborator as well and trained a former student of Guene-Gore on site. Besides, the

fathers built roads and bridges. Small Christian communities were beginning to take root, and a few young people were prepared to become 'prayer leaders'. During his holidays Jan organized special evenings projecting slides, "which were a great success". However, he noted that, with his confreres who worked in Central Africa, there was "total incomprehension on both sides"

In 1978, Jan was appointed to the capital Kayes, where the Bambara language is spoken, which is quite close to the Malinké language. The drought obliged him to intensify the digging of wells. He received a lorry from Liege and a second compressor from Holland. French technicians taught him how to use aerial photographs to discover tectonic fractures where the wells would give more water... At the same time, Jan took on more and more translation work. The fathers built new roads in the mountains; interested volunteer workers from the village were paid by an organization called "Work for Food". Jan's relationship with his Malian parish priest was not the best. In 1982, he was allowed to return to Kassama as parish priest, but he was upset. From that moment on, he always found a reason not to attend meetings and gatherings anymore. In September 1981, Jan took part in the retreat session in Jerusalem. The schools were taken over by the



state around this time, except for the boarding school.

After his home leave in 1985, Jan was transferred to Sagabari, where another dialect of Malinke is spoken. The translations were still done with stencils... But in 1989, he returned from holiday with a laptop and a printer that ran on 12 volts thanks to a solar panel and a car battery. “We publish a synopsis of the four gospels, celebrations in the absence of the priest and the readings for every Sunday of the year...”. In October 1990 Jan was on sick leave: he was suffering from problems of balance. However, he would soon return to work. In 1994, at the age of 62, he heard about a job vacancy at the Procurator’s office in Anvers and applied for it.

Thus at the beginning of 1996, Jan was appointed to the Procurator’s Office. He was the right man for many highly technical orders. The first computer was then introduced in the Procurator’s office. However, he was among those who felt that the traditional Procurator’s office had had its day... But after three years of dedicated service, he opted to join the Genk community. In early May 2001, when Gérard Haels of our health insurance department left Brussels for Congo, Jan was ap-

pointed to replace him. And when ANB-BIA closed in 2003, Mrs Catho Schoofs came to work with him. On her retirement in 2006, Mrs Anne De Corte replaced her. From a technical point of view, Jan significantly improved the service. Jan would hand over to Hugo Mertens in 2007 and returned to Antwerp. He was for many years a much-appreciated assistant to several bursars and a precious handyman for the community: electricity, telephone, computer installations, cycling on errands for confreres and all sorts of repairs in the workshop that he installed in the former Procurator’s office—not forgetting the countless computers that he took to his friend Bob Van Houtven for repair and brought back! Jan was one of the most active members of the Antwerp community at that time.

On 30 December, Jan became seriously ill, and an ambulance was sent to pick him up. The insufflation was not very successful. Jan died in the morning of 4 January 2021, in the palliative care unit of St. Vincent’s Hospital in Antwerp.

The funeral, given the pandemic circumstances, took place privately on Friday 8 January 2021 in our chapel in Varsenare, and the burial in our cemetery.

Jef Vleugels

## Réal Tardif 1934 - 2020

Réal was born on November 29, 1934, in St-Eleuthère, in the Diocese of Ste-Anne de la Pocatière, in the Province of Quebec. He was the son of Joseph Tardif and Alice Raymond. He did his primary studies at St-Eleuthère and his secondary studies at the Séminaire Ste-Anne de la Pocatière, where he obtained his Bachelor of Arts. During these eight years of classical courses, he appeared joyful, simple, and active and appreciated in the community. He was generous at work and persevered in his efforts. He was strong willed and had to strive to be more down to earth because he was very idealistic. He was not an intellectual, but he had good judgment, practical and straightforward. He was devoted to the work of Catholic Action. Among other things, he was the leader of the diocesan YCS.



When he finished his classical studies, he applied to join the White Fathers because this Apostolic Society suited him best for the Lord's invitation. He started his novitiate with the Missionaries of Africa in Laval on August 8, 1955, and gave

himself to both intellectual and manual work. He was appointed to 's-Heerenberg in the Netherlands for his theological studies and was there for two years. He was well-liked in the community, being cheerful, delicate and open. Intellectually, he demonstrated sufficient capacity for his studies but he took time to assimilate things.

For his third year, he went to Totteridge, England, and there again, he was found not to be intellectual. He understood the lessons pretty well, but it took a little time before he could grasp the full meaning of them. Nevertheless, he had a likeable



character, and everyone enjoyed working with him. Although he was delayed at the sub-diaconate for health reasons, he accepted the situation well. He returned to Vanier, Canada, to complete his fourth year of theology. On January 27, 1960, he took his oath and was ordained a priest on January 30 of the same year.

After his ordination, he spent his first year as an English teacher at the Novitiate in St-Martin de Laval. A few months later, on January 16, 1961, he arrived in Rwanda, in Nyundo, still as an English teacher. He was appointed curate in Nyamasheke in 1965, and the following year he went on home leave. After his home leave he followed the 30-day retreat in Rome. He returned to Rwanda, to Mururu, then to Busasamana, Muramba and Nyundo where he was curate until 1970.

To deepen his faith, and at his request, he went to Rome for post-conciliar theological studies until 72. After a leave in Canada, he returned to Rwanda to work in another diocese, in Rwamagana, as a curate and later as parish priest. Unfortunately, he had to change parishes because of conflicts with the parishioners. He thus became curate in Nyamata, then in 82, in Nyumba.

In 82, he took a sabbatical in Nyumba to continue writing a book. He wanted to translate the Bible's message, especially the New Testament, for catechists, but he did not manage to finish writing it.

In 1983, he was curate at Nyamiyaga, and a lecturer at the Institute of African Catechesis in Butare and at the Major Seminary of Nyakibanda, and this until 1988. But in 1984, the bishops decided that he leave the Major Seminary. Community life was not easy for him, and some found that he criticized easily. He continued his work at the Institute of Catechesis in Butare from 1988 to 1992.

He went on leave in 1992. A motorboat pulling a skier hit him hard on his right side and seriously injured his arm, pelvis and abdomen while swimming at Lac Nominique. Fortunately, the occupants pulled him out of the water just as he was about to drown. He was in the hospital for 50 days. He recovered after several operations. However, rehabilitation would take more than a year. He received a substantial amount of money after the lawsuit due to the accident. He gave the money to the Provincial House to recognize the hospitality and help he received from the confreres, and out of this amount,



he gave each confrere in the house a book of his choice.

In October 1993, he returned to Rwanda. The serious unrest and bloody events in the country in April 1994 forced him to return to Canada. He would return to the Major Seminary of Nyakibanda as a lecturer but returned to Montreal at the end of 1995. In 1997 he returned to the Major Seminary and the Institute of African Catechesis in Butare. Unfortunately, at the end of the year, the Episcopal Conference withdrew him from his post. Therefore, he would no longer teach at the Major Seminary. Indeed, Réal was often a source of conflict and tension in the community in those years. He returned to Canada on October 1, 2001, hurt, embittered and a little sour. He made some

donations before he left Rwanda, especially his car and books. He also wrote a letter to the bishops of the country to express his grievances.

Following his appointment to the AMS Province, he took up residence at the Provincial House with the hope to continue writing the book he had already begun. He was appointed to Quebec City in 2008 when the Provincial House on Boulevard de l'Acadie was sold. Gradually, faced with the loss of autonomy on all levels, he was helped to prepare himself to go to Lennoxville. It was a tough decision for him to accept. In September 2015, as his health began to deteriorate, he was appointed to a long term care hospital in the region. He died on January 5, 2021.

Jacques Charron

## Bernard Soliveret 1928 - 2021

**B**ernard was born on the 25th of March 1928 in Dieppe to a Norman mother and a Spanish father from Mallorca (Balearic Islands). He heard the Lord's call at a very young age and joined the local minor seminary. This is how he recounts it: "It was time to change my life at the age of 17. I became interested in Africa and decided to join the missionaries who, in some places, baptised the first converts. Their work was considerable. On learning that it was possible to collaborate with the ministers of the Gospel, I became convinced that this was in line with my charism and my desire to be of service for service. My decision was made: I would be a Missionary of Africa BROTHER. God was calling me to serve Him in a different manner. The proclamation of the Good News can be done both through the word and the administration of the sacra-



ments by priests; it can also be done through the testimony of a life consecrated to God in practical work, with courage and discretion. The BROTHER sees Christians as his brothers and sisters and does not seek to impose himself".

He joined the postulancy of the White Fathers in Antilly. There he took the name, Brother Jean-François. After his Oath (1948), he remained in France (driver to the Provincial), then joined the Novitiate team in Maison Carrée where he was mainly involved in the kitchen. The cleanliness of the kitchen and his qualities were a model of commitment to the novices.

He was appointed to Sikasso, Mali in 1955 and reverted to his name of Bernard. He was in charge of construction and installing electricity. Bernard later became the diocesan bursar and was in charge



of all the diocesan workshops: carpentry and welding. Besides serving the diocese's needs, he also trained the workers so that one day they would be able to work by themselves. He gradually added new occupations by setting up a bookshop and an offset printer. His calmness, patience, fraternal sense, and precision in everything he did, all made him fulfilled in his notion of brotherhood as he had envisioned it.

From time to time, he would be late. He was relatively slow, which was the downside of his insistence on precision and fidelity: You could always trust him to do everything well, even if it took him time. On the other hand, if he felt that he was not trusted or was scorned, that hurt him a lot, since he appreciated community life and a brotherly atmosphere.

His judgment was calm and mature. He was twice a member of the Regional Council in Mali. He was a good counsellor, and his fineness allowed him to have a deep sense of issues, albeit inwardly. This was his asset and his strength but also his weakness. He was sometimes sensitive, but constantly sought to please and remained attached to those he loved. He had at times health problems and often suffered from insomnia. His music

and the care of flowers served to take his mind off things.

Bernard was always at ease in work that was well organized, and he also knew how to vary the work and to take initiatives. For example, when the Bishop of Sikasso, Mgr de Montclos, was close to death, he was taken to Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso and died there. That made things to be complicated. He had to be buried in Sikasso, Mali. To cross a border with a corpse from one country to another was a difficult thing to do. But Bernard knew how to handle the risk: he placed the body of Mgr de Montclos inside his truck and returned to Mali waving at the police and customs officers. He knew them all, and everything went well.

As a sign of his honesty, however, he returned the next day to greet the policemen and explain what he had done the day before. That didn't cause any problems because everyone knew him as a friend. Honest and decisive, he was that contented servant on whom his master could rely, even in difficult times. The whole diocese trusted him. Above all, the two bishops he served (Mgr de Montclos and Mgr Cissé) relied entirely on him.

Seeking a more spiritual service



with fewer responsibilities, Bernard was appointed to Koutiala as curate of the parish and managed the finances in that northern part of the diocese of Sikasso. Unfortunately, in 1998, he had to leave Mali for France. While his health had never been excellent, it improved a little in Paris. His amiability and efficient organisation were well suited for working at rue Friant's reception desk, where many confreres from Africa pass through.

He loved his family very much and visited them from Paris: his elderly mother in a retirement home next to Dieppe, and his sister, Sr Blanche in Sceaux. He enjoyed spending his holidays with his family in the Balearic Islands whenever he was fit. He enjoyed these stays and came back with typical products from this region. Everyone

loved him very much; both his family and his fellow White Fathers, and he also loved them in return.

His retirement came in 2016: he was becoming frequently sick and was appointed to Billère (to Pau) in the south of France. Despite the quality of medical care in this house, one felt he was suffering a lot, often bent backwards in his armchair. Although he did not complain, he preferred the presence of his confreres in his room or in the hospital to help him fight against loneliness.

We have delightful memories of him as a confrere, easy to live with, fulfilled in his vocation as a White Father Brother. And he accomplished his purpose in life, as he formulated it in the novitiate. Thank you, Bernard!

Jean Cauvin

## Paul Geers 1931 - 2021

Paul was born in Brugge on June 2 1931. He did his primary and secondary education at the St. Lodewijks college in his home town, and in September 1951, he joined the White Fathers in Boe-chout. After the novitiate in Varsenare, he studied theology in Heverlee, where he took his missionary oath on July 6 1957. He was ordained priest there on Easter Day, April 6 1958. A cheerful and optimistic character, with equally good humour. He enjoyed telling jokes. He had an easy way of relating. A balanced personality, sufficiently firm, “who can be severe with a smile, as well as being constructive “. A little touchy at times. He asked for North Africa in his last year.

In September of the same year, 1958, Paul, who was the first non-French WF in Tunisia, started as bursar and teacher at the “Lycée Agricole de Thibar”, which the



White Fathers began in the former scholasticate buildings. In 1956, Tunisia became independent. Initially, the 30 first-year students considered the fathers to be “cursed Christians”, but they quickly became friends thanks to the family spirit

that the confreres managed to create. Paul studied in Tunis from 1959 to 1961 at the Manouba (Pontifical Institute of Arabic Studies), where he learned to read and speak Arabic. In 1961, he became a teacher at the El Menzah secondary school run by the White Fathers in Tunis. In 1965, he took over the direction of the school.

The school was closed in July 1969. To ensure that he could obtain the annual work permit, Paul studied on the spot for a degree in “Management and International Business”. A company that wanted to develop tourism offered Paul an important job. Thus began his “career” as a



development worker. He is grateful to the Society to have stood up for the confreres vis-à-vis the bishops, who wanted them to work in parishes made up of expatriate Christians. More and more, Paul worked for the national ministry of economy. Time and again, he was the man his Muslim colleagues would rely on. From the region, Jacques Remy referred to him as a “civil servant priest in administration”, but acknowledged that his work put him in contact with many Tunisians. “Other religions helped me enormously to live together with heterodox people. We don’t have the monopoly of eternal truth,” says Paul. In September 1979 he was appointed regional superior and reappointed for a second term. Many would remember his friendliness, his broad-mindedness and his psychological finesse.

In 1988, Paul worked for the Carthage Study Centre, which was the university’s library. In 1990, however, when Bishop Callens died on August 19, he was appointed diocesan administrator “sede vacante”. At that time, the Church in Tunisia had about fifty priests, some 170 religious sisters and lay helpers, who were engaged in teaching, public health, caring for physically handicapped people and

in development work. Paul acknowledged this to be a modest contribution from the Church, “a discreet presence without much tangible result”.

In June 1992, Bishop Fouad Twal of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem (but born in Mabada, Jordan) was appointed Bishop of Tunis. Rome asked Paul to become Vicar General and introduce the bishop to this country, which was still new to him. In the same year, Paul became president of the Carthage Study Centre. And on November 28 1994, he became Honorary Prelate to His Holiness and henceforth bore the title of Monsignor. On March 6, 1995, he also received a Belgian distinction: “Chevalier de l’Ordre de la Couronne” (Knight of the Order of the Crown). Moreover, since 1995 Paul also served as vice-president of the association, founded by the Sisters of Sion, “Es Salem, “aiming at economic and social development of young people.

In January 2003, he received his last appointment in Tunisia: parish priest in La Goulette. When he was on home leave in Belgium in 2006, he confided to the provincial, Father Luc Lefief, that he would return for good on the occasion of his jubilee of fifty years



of priesthood. So in July 2007, Luc contacted the Maghreb Provincial and asked that Paul be appointed to Belgium. The reaction of the regional father of the Maghreb, Francisco Donayre: “Paul is going to leave an incredible vacuum that we cannot fill. What he was doing here required a very long presence in the country”.

So in July 2008, Paul returned to Belgium, and in November, became the superior of our “maison d’accueil” community in Brussels. In principle, more was in store for him. Luc Lefief wrote: “Besides, there is an enormous need to have a confrere in Brussels capable of following what is being done from an Islamic point of view. There was the El Kalima institute, founded by a WF, where confreres are no longer present”.

Paul was a good and attentive superior for his confreres in the Rue de Linthout; he welcomed confreres from other communities in Brussels and visitors from elsewhere. His insertion in the Muslim world of Brussels was not so obvious. The collaboration with El Kalima was hardly a success. He gave some much-appreciated lectures and wrote some articles. His

interest in the Arab world remained intact, but Islam in Brussels has so many faces... He noted: “What the Muslim world and especially the Arab world is experiencing today is far from a springtime, it is a tragedy. The tragedy is this: Islam has lost its rigid identity, and no authority can decide what ‘true Islam’ is.”

In 2014, he participated in the 60+ transition session in Rome. He joined the community of Varsenare, near the city of Brugge, which he loved so much, in February 2016. He remained a kind man, a pleasant confrere, but above all a grateful person: “I give thanks for the Muslims with whom I have lived. They made me learn humility.” - “I give thanks for the Muslims who made me discover that I didn’t possess the truth, that they didn’t have the truth either, and that God alone is truth”.

In spite of undergoing intensive chemotherapy Paul died in St. John’s Hospital in Bruges on January 13 2021.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the funeral took place privately on Tuesday, January 19 2021, in our chapel in Varsenare, followed by burial in our cemetery.

Jef Vleugels



### Marcel Boivin 1936-2021

**M**arcel was born on September 3, 1936, in St-Cajetan d'Armagh in the Province of Quebec. He was the son of Joseph Boivin and Clara Giguère. He did his primary studies partly in Quebec City and partly in Île d'Orléans. He completed his high school studies in Lévis for four years and in Ste-Anne de La Pocatière for the other four years. He had a work-related accident at the age of 17, in which he lost three fingers on his right hand. He joined the White Fathers, Missionaries of Africa, in 1956. He had a very enriching five-year formation period. Writing later he would state that: "It was mostly in Eastview that I experienced a community life that filled me with joy, while at the same time I studied theology at a higher level than what I would later find in Rome." He was ordained to the priesthood in Eastview



on January 28, 1961. The following September, he was in Rome to continue his theological studies.

Mission in Tanzania Great Britain and Mozambique

For his first appointment in Africa, he was sent to the Diocese of Bukoba in Tanzania. There, he taught at the Major Seminary of Ntungamo for three years, from 1964 to 1967. His stay in Africa was brief. He was in Totteridge from 1967 and taught there until 1972. Then he was sent to the Scholasticate in Vanier to complete his service as a lecturer in 1973 and 1974. Then he became chaplain to the Canadian Armed Forces for a year.

He returned once more to Tanzania in 1975, where he first learned the language in Tabora before he became curate and then superior in Ngote, in the Diocese of Tabora, and in Ngara, in the Diocese of Rulenge. In 81, he was appointed



lecturer at the Major Seminary of Kipalapala and in 84, he was appointed to Mozambique, in Maputo, still as lecturer. He took part in the reopening of the Major Seminary, which had suffered greatly during the civil war. Looking back at these last ten years in Africa he wrote: "In all, I spent ten happy years there, possibly the most fruitful years of my life. »

## Mission in Canada, Jerusalem and Tanzania

He returned to Canada in 1986, to Thornhill, Ontario, for missionary animation. The following year he was appointed Provincial Superior of the Province of Canada and re-elected for a second term three years later.

It was often pointed out that the dominant feature of his approach to the numerous tasks he was assigned to was teaching. The same applied to too few years which he spent in parish ministry.

In 1993 he returned to Tanzania. While there, he was invited to Jerusalem to accompany the confreres on the 30-day retreat. On his return to Tanzania, he was appointed curate in Makokola, in the Diocese of Tabora. And the following year, he was back as a teacher in Kipa-

lapala. The General Council appointed him in 1998 for three years to St Anne's in Jerusalem to accompany the retreatants. In 2001 he returned to Tanzania, where he took up residence at Atiman House.

And it was there, in 2003, that he began experiencing more difficulties with his voice. What a tragedy for a teacher! He was entrusted with a ministry to the sick in Dar-Es-Salaam. He wrote later on: "We were looking for a chaplain to visit the patients of the three major hospitals in Dar-Es-Salaam, one of which specialized in cancer patients; a ministry that lasted seven years." He also led several retreats for confreres and parish communities during this period.

Finally, Marcel returned to Canada in 2010. During these years a doctor friend was able to help him come to terms with moments of depression. He would limit his ministry to what he felt he could do.

He spent three years in Toronto. The following year, he wrote his 'remembrance meditation.' He then spent six years in the Quebec community from 2013. It is worth noting the missionary spirit of this last appointment according to the letter from the Provincial in 2013 and referred to in 2016: "The



community is a fertile mission ground. With all your experience, you will know how to sow the enthusiasm we need to bear the torch... always lit. Your presence in the community is your first mission. But you will have the freedom to offer still other services according to your abilities and sensitivities”.

### Talent for Writing

Marcel had a great talent and taste for writing in both English and French. As a lecturer, he often contributed thoughtful articles to renowned theological journals.

In 2014, he expressed his desire to return to Africa, to Nairobi, and be available to confreres with personal problems. However, his desire would not be fulfilled.

In the same year, 2014, he wrote a text inviting the Society to be ever more attentive to the Spirit. “The essential he wrote, is an emancipated and maturing spirituality, renewed by the Word the Lord ad-

resses to us today, animated by the Spirit that He never ceases to send down upon us. We have to embark on it. The authenticity of our mission is at stake.”

He proposed that the house in Quebec City be retained instead of the one of Lennoxville in 2016. In 2017, he wrote a long article of about twenty pages on “The right to freedom of expression.”

Together with all the confreres of the Quebec community, he moved to our new retirement home, la Résidence Cardinal Vachon, on March 4, 2017. However, his health continued to deteriorate. He was suffering from a generalized cancer. At the end of December 2020, a confrere kept watch over him day and night. On January 11, following his own ardent wish he was welcomed at ‘Maison Michel Sarrazin.’ It is there that Marcel died on January 19, 2021, at the age of 84, after 60 years of missionary life in Italy, Tanzania, Israel, Great Britain, Mozambique and Canada.

Jacques Charron

## Missionaries of Africa

Father Fernand Lambert, of the Diocese of Mechelen-Brussels, Belgium. He died in Brussels, Belgium, on the 25th of February 2021, at the age of 91 years, of which 66 years of missionary life in DR Congo, Rwanda and Belgium.

Father Georg Luckner, of the Diocese of Freiburg, Germany. He died in Hechingen, Germany, on the 1st March 2021, at the age of 86 years, of which 60 years of missionary life in Burundi, Canada and Germany.

Father Marcel Mangnus, of the Diocese of Breda, the Netherlands. He died in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on the 7th March 2021, at the age of 82 years, of which 58 years of missionary life in Tanzania and the Netherlands.

Father Hans Schmidt, of the Diocese of Breda, Germany. He died in Soest, Germany, on the 8th March 2021, at the age of 80 years, of which 52 years of missionary life in DR Congo and in Germany.

Father Friedrich (Fritz) Stenger, of the Diocese of Würzburg, Germany. He died in Munich, Germany, on the 17th March 2021, at the age of 78 years, of which 50 years of missionary life in Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, Italy and Germany.

Father Jean-Marie Vasseur, Superior General from 1974 to 1980, of the diocese of Amiens, France. He died in Billère, France, on the 25th of March 2021, at the age of 93, of which 68 years of missionary life in Burkina Faso, Italy and France.

## Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

Sister Anne Mellerio (Sr Agnès). She died in Paris, France, on the 19th of February 2021, at the age of 104, of which 75 years of religious missionary life, in Mali, Burkina and France.

Sister Monique Heon (Marthe). She died in Paris, France, on the 20th February 2021, at the age of 99 years, of which 74 years of religious missionary life in Algeria, Tunisia, Burkina Faso and France.

Sister Bernadette Piron (Paule de Bethlehem). She died in Evere, Belgium, on the 21st of February 2021, at the age of 86 years, of which 61 years of religious missionary life in DR. Congo and Belgium.

Sister Beatrijs ten Hagen (Christophorus). She died in Boxtel, Netherlands, on the 25th of February 2021, at the age of 90 years, of which 69 years of religious missionary life in Tanzania and the Netherlands.

Sister Gerda Slaghekke (Sr. Gertrude ). She died in Boxtel, Netherlands, on the 4th of March 2021 at the age of 89 years, of which 66 years of religious missionary life in Tanzania and the Netherlands.

Sister Marie-Josée Dor. She died in Villeurbanne, France, on the 18th of March 2021, at the age of 95 years, of which 67 years of religious missionary life in Algeria, Italy and France.

# CONTENTS

## FOREWORD

- 131 **ROME** La formation at the service of the mission,  
*Didier Sawadogo, Assistant General.*

## GENERAL COUNCIL

- 134 **ROME** First appointment of young confreres,  
*Robert Beyuo Tebri, Secretary for Initial Formation.*

## MISSION

- 135 **PAC** Mission in a House of Formation, *Jean-Jacques Mukanga.*  
138 **SOA** Humps on the road to reach the destination, *Filiyanus Ekka.*  
142 **GhN** Missionary formation in a post-modern world,  
*Prosper Harelimana.*  
146 **GhN** Training young people to become compassionate missionaries,  
and not bosses, *Bonaventure Gubazire.*  
151 **PAC** Saint Joseph Mukasa Missionary Formation Centre,  
Kimbondo, *Etudiants de Kimbondo, Kinshasa.*  
154 **PAO** From Maison Lavigerie in Ouagadougou, students testify,  
*Fulgence Sanou, Blaise Bakouyouou and Sawadogo Barthelemy.*  
158 **SOA** Life in the Cebu Formation Community,  
*Mark Brigole et Christian Lampangog.*  
162 **SAP** What attracts us to the Missionaries of Africa?,  
*Étudiants (2021), Maison de formation Lechaptois, Balaka*  
166 **PAC** The effects of Integrity of Ministry on pastoral work.,  
*Bernard Ugeux.*  
170 **MSOLA** Jesus Christ, today, what for?, *Sr Gaby Lepage.*

## READINGS

- 174 L'Église et la diversité des Religions, by Henri de la Hougue,  
*Gilles Mathorel.*

## PROFILES

- |                     |                   |                       |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 176 Jan Hoogmartens | 179 Réal Tardif   | 182 Bernard Soliveret |
| 185 Paul Geers      | 188 Marcel Boivin |                       |

## R. I. P.

- 191 Confreres and MsOLA who died recently.

