



**MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA**

# Ghana-Nigeria Link



## TOWARDS SELF-RELIANT COMMUNITIES



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**A Tigrigna proverb. Aleba šaret entehabir, anbessa yeasir. Meaning WHEN SPIDER WEBS UNITE, THEY CAN TIE A LION. It is used to stress on cooperation and team work to achieve great job.**



## EDITORIAL

Once again, the Media Team of the Ghana-Nigeria Province comes to interact with you and is happy to publish the second of the two numbers it normally publishes each year. This edition is special in nature. It calls each one of us to a change of mindset in the way he handles current and fixed assets, most especially the ones of the Society. The way we handle our assets calls for a financial metanoia. This is the kind of change which will usher us in the 29<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of our Society which is supposed to take place next year.

We are grateful to all those who took their time to reflect and share their ideas on self-reliance. Our sincere gratitude also goes to those who dared to challenge our culture of not rendering productive our assets – current and fixed assets put at our disposal.

In this edition, you will find the following insights: a word from the Ghana-Nigeria Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of Africa will highlight current happenings in the province; diligent use of our fallow lands – Dungu and Fian; an attempted definition of self-reliance; “Don’t give me fish, but teach me how to fish” – St Martin of Tours’ experience and understanding of self-reliance; one of us named and enstooled Chief – Naa Sansa I; revisiting the Ghana-Nigeria Pre-Capitular Assembly; new insights about missionary prospective and a deliberated return to abandoned old lands of mission – Moslem Centre in Belgium, and opening up to new missionary adventures – going to Vietnam and Tchad and strengthening our missionary presence in Mauritania; dreaming about owning provincial institutions of higher learning, prayer and research; Spirituality – living solid spiritual lives and local language learning – a mandatory process that entails a serious provincial planning; the past, the present, and the future of the province – great missionaries have left, young missionaries are coming in – stagiaires and energetic young confreres, what shows us that Lavigerie’s dream is alive; new projects being inaugurated, and other projects in the pipeline; an existential and pastoral challenge – Zero Missionary; future formation plans of the Ghana-Nigeria Province – projected statistics; inauguration of Lavigerie House in Minna, Nigeria; and many other insightful shared ideas.

We “look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” For this same reason, remembering and praying for our beloved confreres, and relatives “who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection” is very important.

As you read this edition, you will also have access to selected news about our province.

On the behalf of the Media Team, let me thank all those who took their time to share with us their experiences. It is my hope that for the subsequent editions, we shall have most of us, if not all of us, appropriate time to share our joy and challenges of our missionary adventure.

**Prosper Harelimana, M. Afr.**





**John Aserbire**

**A word from the Provincial Superior**

***Working towards Self-Reliant communities – 26<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2021***

Self-reliance is not a new phenomenon in our society. It had been in discussions for decades at various levels. Self-reliance is relying on one's own abilities, efforts and resources to achieve a goal. It is having a vision for yourself, instead of waiting for people to do everything for you. It starts with creating an initiative and when necessary, asking donors to support. Self-reliance is crucial to safeguard our self-esteem, dignity, identity and self-respect. In self-reliance, we control our destiny and develop our vision and objectives that fit our cultural and geographical context. For that matter, the projects we propose become relevant to the needs of our communities. It also allows us and our local communities to gain maximum profits from the projects. It helps us to bond with our communities as we explore and increase our faith, knowledge and skills.

Recently, in our conversation with the Archbishop of Ibadan, we touched on the generosity of our faithful. We recalled

the donation of three cars for the first three Nigerian confreres from Ibo land. It reminded us not to underestimate the generosity of our people when it comes to supporting the priests and the Church in general. This generosity is found in many communities in Africa. Currently, in some Arch/dioceses in Africa, a newly ordained priest is offered a (second-hand) car for his apostolate. Fundraising committees have been established in some parishes to raise money to start, expand or improve on existing income generation projects. Our people are ready to support us if we involve them.

The questions that still linger in my mind are centered on our attitude, ability and commitment to raise local funds. We need funds for the upkeep of our confreres, the means of transport, the building of parish projects, the maintenance of existing buildings and so on. Can our commissions (JPIC-ED, MEDIA, MISAFAMILY, ISLAM, etc.) be self-supporting? Should all the funds for our local projects come from Rome? Can we

maintain our simple lifestyle that will convince people that we need their help? Are we ready to make efforts and to commit ourselves to our plans? Are we bold enough to ask for funds?

All the invitation letters I received this year from some Arch/dioceses and different congregations on their anniversary celebrations had included in their program a fundraising event to finance an income generation project. I asked myself what happened to our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Did we raise funds for our projects? No! What was in our mind set? We made clothes, T-shirts, souvenirs, food and drink for people. What a lost opportunity to mark the anniversary with a

jubilee income generating project!

Nonetheless, I am convinced that the local faithful are capable and willing to support our communities. Let us take the challenge. We can succeed in self-reliance if we change our attitudes and mind set. I wish to thank all for sharing your views on this topic. May your precious ideas spur us on towards building self-reliant communities.

**By Fr. John Aserbire, M.Afr.  
Provincial, Ghana-Nigeria.**





## BECOMING INDUSTRIOUS COMMUNITIES



**Nicholas Mulinge N.**

During 150 years of foundation, things have changed drastically. Becoming a missionary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century won't be regarded the same as it was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century when our founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie took the risk of founding the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. The missionary demands have also changed with the challenge of the financial sustainability in mission. In this 21<sup>st</sup> C, being a missionary doesn't always mean travelling to developing countries. Being a missionary means taking on the mission of spreading the gospel - which is something all Christians are called to do. Pursuing mission, in some instances, isn't always about leaving one's hometown, because in some places, a different culture and religion could be next door from where one is. Sometimes, missionaries have to stay right where they are and use the gifts God has given them. It's indeed by using our different gifts that we'll build industrious communities and have a common concern about the financial sustainability of our Society.

As Missionaries, God calls us to live in a world of abundance by taking risks and

being generous. The best place to do this is in our parishes, and, in addition to that, in our communities. It is in such a perspective that Lavigerie Community in Wa (Ghana) has zealously embarked on the willingness to share its abilities in creative worship in the Church and innovative farming in the community.

Since 2019, Lavigerie Community took the initiative to give a trial in farming. The time had gone, rain had advanced but with determination, the confreres negotiated for a plot of land adjacent to the community and did farming. For a period of three years, this plot of land has given us good yields and it has kept on motivating us to even go further. In addition to that, the community has a garden and a minimal poultry that have been of great help. These initiatives do help us a lot in that we consume what we produce, have clean vegetables whose source is known and it sustains the community to be healthy and efficient in the apostolate.

Despite the numerous activities and apostolate demands at St. Benedict's Parish in Wa, Lavigerie Community posed a challenge to itself by coming up with a garden, a poultry and a farm. It's

a demanding task but it gives life to the community. The main reason for these initiatives was for self-sustenance. It was at a particular moment, when we concretely examined ourselves, that we realized that some of us, besides the Apostolate, are clearly very gifted with valuable abilities, but there is no one, absolutely no one, who can say he has been gifted with nothing. In the community, for instance, we may be especially talented in teaching children or cooking meals or repairing homes or programming computers or farming – as we are from a farming culture, etc.

Another reason is the availability of the resources (land and water). At Lavigerie house there is a portion of land that is available for gardening and a permanent borehole that facilitates our garden work. Though the topography is rocky with weak soil, this doesn't discourage confreres. It's often a shock to parishioners when a confrere goes for a Small Christian Community Mass in a family and when he sees animal manure he requests it and takes it with him on the vehicle. We've also been going to collect manure in one village (Chanza) almost 10 km from the community on the way to Lassie Tuolo. Usage of natural manure has greatly changed the soil PH, which has become reliable for vegetable farming. As for farming it's done during the rainy season, during which we've tried also to introduce foreign beans from Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda and shared some of these with some people so as to multiply the species in the region.

When such a dream project is maturing and slowly coming to actualisation, the greatest challenge the initiators faced was that of risk taking. This came with many questions on how to go about it, its

management and the most critical, the results or outcome expected from the project. Another striking challenge was partial discouragements and critics from within the community and the outside world. More so, St. Benedict Parish has a very busy schedule with a lot of activities, and creation of time to attend to other activities other than the apostolate was one of the great challenges among others. As for Lavigerie Community to come up with such a project, these were some of the initial challenges that were critical and demanding. Despite that, with determination and hope we decided to go for it in a spirit of togetherness, support and prayer; and we'd say, *God has been gracious!*

Once you set out on a journey, be it in the area of formation, organisation or a self-sustainable project, there are certain things you cannot avoid or live without: problems or challenges. It's the case for our self-reliance project. So far, the problem that challenges us most is the attitude of saying, "*it's their project, it doesn't concern me*", even though the project is for the community. There will be often differences of ideas, engagement and concern. And this attitude demotivates a lot as often it creates division in the community. The second problem is time. The primary purpose of our community is the apostolate, and sacrificing time for other activities is really demanding.

You will agree with me that the human family is charged with preserving the beauty, diversity and integrity of nature as well as fostering its productivity. Towards becoming industrious community (ies) creating self-reliance projects will be the means by which we can contribute to the latter. The solution to such a pro-

ject lies within each one of us. Being appreciative and grateful for the well elaborated formation program of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, in order really to become/develop self-reliant communities, there is a need to change our way of seeing and doing things and our attitude so that we may fit and adjust to the changing world. Secondly, though it's done, there is a need of more emphasis in our formation centres to students that becoming a Missionary doesn't mean doing or carrying out only administrative work or sitting in an office. Times have changed and we need to adapt ourselves to a changing world, as a way of becoming slowly by slowly self-sufficient.

There is a great need to be visionaries. As a Society, God has blessed us with a lot of "gold" as most of our communities are seated on vast and fertile lands. Despite this, there's always a danger we might "do the wrong thing" and lose the grace we have, as the parable of the talents (Mt 25: 14-30) teaches us that a "take-no-chances" policy is not Christian. For instance, in the Ghana Sector,

there are two lands, Dungu in Tamale and Fian land in Wa that could be useful for self-reliance projects in the Sector while waiting to implement the pending projects. Instead of leaving the lands lie down, there could be initiatives for income generating projects, or plant maize and beans during the rainy season and after the harvest sell the products to finance other activities in the Province.

If really we want to actualize and make changes towards becoming self-reliant communities today and tomorrow, this is the time to "trade" with our talents of our Christian Faith. All of us in our communities (Society) have received at least one talent namely our Faith, and our responsibility is not just to preserve and "keep" the Faith, but to work with it. We need to promote and add value to Faith by living it out, concretizing what we think is constructive to the idea. This is because, the way to preserve the Faith, or any other talent that God has given us, is to put it to work and make it bear fruit, and this is possible.

**Nicholas Mulinge**





## *St Thomas Community, Agbowo, Ibadan: towards a self-reliant community*



**Alain Sossou**

Talking about self-reliance in Society to be self-reliant. Looking at the our Society today is some- definition of social self- reliance, we thing on the lips of all of us, came to understand that “social self- as Missionaries of Africa. reliance refers to the ability of a commu- The need and necessity of having a self- nity to function with a level of cohesion, reliant community should be our priori- social accountability and mutual de- ty because of the way expenses are in- pendence-taking decisions, mobilising creasing and incomes are reducing. At resources, and building and maximising our humble level, here at St Thomas interpersonal capacity to address issues Community, Ibadan Nigeria, we, the and initiative for mutual benefit”. With members of the community (6 in total), this definition in mind, we understand have decided to bring our contribution clearly that, to be self-reliant is the towards the appeal of the Society to be work of all the members of a particular self-reliant. Despite our tight and busy community, each member should bring schedule here with the activities in our his contribution towards the erection of two parishes (St Thomas, Agbowo and a community where all of us feel at St Augustine quasi-parish, Ojoo), we are home, where all of us have the sense of not leaving aside the clarion call of our belonging and contributing for the good

of the community. In other words, when we don't use chemicals, we use only manure and water and rely on the goodness of the soil to give us good fruits. Our fish agents of their own development and in-pond and our garden, throughout the dependence, we talk about members year give us satisfaction and happiness building up a self-reliant community. of feeling that we contribute to our own Even though, for the time being, we are feeding and upkeep. Using our hand to far away from this ideal of being totally bring food to the table, and using our independent financially from the Society time to feed the fish or to work in the of the Missionaries of Africa, however, at garden bring us satisfaction and feelings our humble level, we try our best to that we are not useless, but useful to bring our contribution and the work of each other, useful to the creation of God. our hands together to build a self-reliant On top of the contribution as members of community. We try as much as we can to St Thomas community, we can also rely be transparent in our accountability, on the contribution of our parishioners any money received from the sector bur- from our two parishes who also bring sar we use effectively and adequately, no their contribution through offerings in waste, no luxury. In the community, we kind and in cash. In fact, our parishion- have some activities that help us to ers bring to their priests items like yam, avoid as much as possible to be com- eggs, cooking oil, rice, toilets rolls, and pletely dependent from the Province: we so on and so forth. All these items and have a fish pond, whereby we raise cat- cash received from the parishioners help fish, and these catfish are for local con- us not to be too much dependent on the sumption and sometimes, when we have Society. It is true St Thomas, Agbowo too much fish, we sell them and the and St Augustine, quasi-parish, are money is used for the benefit of the com- growing parishes, but looking at the are- munity. We have also a fruit and vegeta- as where these parishes are established, ble garden that helps us to have fresh looking at the population and their in- fruits and fresh vegetables coming comes, and more especially looking at straight from our garden. In our garden the different projects at hand in our two



parishes (completion of the church, tiling of the roof and ceiling) it is still difficult for them to find ways to build a self-reliant community that takes care of 100 percent of the needs whereby each member feels happy and fulfilled. This article is attached with some pictures showing our different activities concerning our interest in building up a self-reliant community. we are grateful to the Lord for the gift of our community here, in Ibadan, Nigeria, for the contribution of all the members and also for the support of our parishion-

**By Alain Sossou**



## **TOWARDS SELF-RELIANT COMMUNITIES**

### ***A Shared Experience from St Martin of Tours Formation House, Ejisu***



**Prosper Harelimana**



**Gbantigben Etienne Duut**

#### **Historical background**

It has long been said that “sufficient for the day is enough.” This adage is pregnant with wisdom. It advocates for dependency on divine providence – total dependence on God for our needs. This way of living is good because it reduces human suffering emanating from worries about how to earn daily bread. In the same line, it minimizes accumulation of wealth by few to the neglect of vast majority since its ideal is to depend on God. However, the current ever pressing issue is how to couple our dependence on divine providence with the spirit of self-reliance and human creativity. Our reflection sets out to explain why St. Martin of Tours Formation House dreams of becoming a self-reliant community. It shall start with a historical background of St. Martin of Tours’ self-sustainable projects, their raison d’être, the current wave of change and future feasible plans.

The projects started gradually and at different times. The piggery was the first to be put in place. It was initiated by van Campen Ferdinand, M. Afr., around the year 2009, who was the bursar of the formation community. Since then, the project has been continued by other subsequent Missionary of Africa bursars; Efiyo Ama Gilles, Thomas Schwiedessen of blessed memory, Prosper Harelimana and the current bursar, Jacek Wróblewski. Currently, we have 37 pigs. One pig is sold between Gh₵ 500.00 (Five Hundred Ghana Cedis Only) and Gh₵ 700.00 (Seven Hundred Ghana Cedis Only). They are sold based on their weight and fat. However, the price may go higher depending on the weight. The ones with less fat yield more profit compared to fatty ones. We have one hired worker who takes care of the piggery except on statal holidays and Sundays where a team of students takes care of them.



The fish, the local poultry and the rabbit projects had a gradual start too. The poultry and the fish projects were started by Nicholas Aayire, M. Afr. This served its purpose for some years. The fishpond got damaged, and it also coincided with the end of Nicholas' term of office as rector. The fishpond was then renovated by Christopher Chileshe, M. Afr. It began to function and since then we have often stocked 400 fingerlings. It is presently meant to complement nutritional needs of the community. This is because the size of the pond is relatively small.

The local poultry project from the beginning was an extensive system of rearing. This means fowls were fed once a day and at night perched on trees. This system was not suitable for them as newly hatched chicks often fell prey to other strong birds – crows and probably eagles, not forgetting pigs, dogs, and snakes. Such a situation hindered the poultry productivity. To counteract such unproductive system, the team of students in charge came up with some feasible proposals or recommendations. These recommendations included: creating a fence to protect the poultry from the pigs and the dogs; provide some cages to keep newly hatched chicks and protect them from snakes and crows. And finally, provide a structure within the fence to house the poultry. These recommendations were unanimously accepted by the house (both formators and students). The project started with ten fowls, eight hens and two cocks. Presently we have 54 fowls including young ones.

However, we thought it wise to include turkeys and ducks. We started with three turkeys, one male and two females. Currently we have six young turkeys

hatched in the house they were eight, but we lost two. The other female is presently incubating 13 eggs. Though we have not yet started selling turkeys, we are aware that a male turkey is sold at Gh₵ 500.00 (Five Hundred Ghana Cedis Only) whereas a female one is sold at Gh₵ 350.00 (Three Hundred Fifty Ghana Cedis Only). Meanwhile a turkey's egg is sold at Gh₵ 20.00 (Twenty Ghana Cedis Only). The ducks we just brought them, one male and two females. The housing project started somewhere in April 2021. The rabbit project became necessary upon realizing that there were unused structures suitable for rabbit breeding. The team of students also discovered that it would be easy feeding them. There is grass available, yam and watermelon peels, and at times waste from vegetables. This was recommended by the rector, Christopher Chileshe, M. Afr. This new adventure was also discussed and approved by the community. We started with three rabbits, one male and two females. Presently, we have 12 rabbits. We lost six young ones, and their loss came across as a learning experience for us. We keep on looking for new ways of improving our rabbitry.

There were no difficulties in implementing these projects. They were well planned and gradually carried out. These projects are at their early stage except the piggery. So far, our gains outweigh losses. The future of the projects is promising.

### **Self-sustainable projects: their *raison d'être***

One may ask, what is the purpose of these projects? We hold with a strong

conviction the view that lies behind the adage; “Don’t give me fish but teach me how to fish.” Such a worldview encourages the spirit of responsibility, co-responsibility, creativity and fights juvenile laziness. A twofold rationale lies behind our projects – nutritional and formative. First, though most of these projects are at their initial stage, they will in a long-term plan serve the nutritional needs of the community. They will equally not only cut down expenditure on meat and vegetables but also provide the community with natural products – not genetically modified. The waste from poultry, pigs, and rabbits is used as natural manure in the garden for vegetable production. Discharged water from the fish pound is as well rich in nutrients to fertilize our community garden. Therefore, healthy food will be served on our dining table, and health issues relating to artificial fertilizer will be minimized if not eliminated. Second, candidates – young people in formation, are being equipped with skills in rearing and farming for future mission. To dirt our hands – by working in a piggery or garden while in formation is something inherently formative.

In addition to the two ends of our projects, it is worth noting that taking care of animals and plants encourages intellectual and artistic creativity. This aspect equally touches our Society’s charism as far as Integrity of Creation is concerned. One discovers or comes to the awareness that God exists by careful observation of our Mother Earth and all that she inhabits. And such an observation calls for ecological conversion – reject a culture of consumerism and learn to respect the environment. Thus, rearing animals and planting trees are a

constant reminder that God endowed us with a powerful mind capable of bringing about new ideas for the progress of humankind. It also becomes elating to praise God by becoming His co-creators, i.e., by fully participating in God’s creative initiative – being responsible caretakers of our Mother Earth.

### **Current wave of change and future feasible plans**

Change of beliefs, attitudes and ideas brings about positive and fulfilled living. Philosophers like Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle have written about change. Heraclitus posits that “change is the only constant thing in life.” The way things were done in the past has surely seen a shift. Constant depletion of our natural resources has taught Man a lesson, for “an unexamined life is not worth living”, says Socrates. Through examination of life, we the community of St. Martin of Tours have decided to venture into the above-described self-sustainable projects. Why buy vegetables from the market when we have arable land? Why buy eggs when our poultry farm would provide us with eggs and chicken for a healthy and complete diet? One should learn to maximize resources not just for temporary use only but also for a lifetime one

The society of the Missionaries of Africa has for a long time depended on divine providence through benefactors, generous confreres and other men and women of goodwill. Such altruistic men and women will not continue doing this forever. There is an urgent need to change our mindset – the way we perceive and understand the idea of self-reliance. The unreasoned spending culture without



imagining new ways of raising our income ought to stop. This, therefore, necessitates the need to initiate self-sustainable projects to cut down our living expenses. The world current financial situation tells us: 'Be Self-reliant Communities Today as you seriously think about Tomorrow.' We would say that we delayed, or we are slow to change our mindset regarding the way we handle our current and fixed assets put at our disposal.

Therefore, it is time 'we walk the talk' by imagining and implementing self-sustainable projects in view of financing our formation programs and other missionary activities.

To conclude, we recall that this article

set out to share with you St. Martin of Tours Formation House's ideal – a dream of becoming a self-reliant community. It has described self-reliance-oriented activities that are being carried out by both formators and students in St. Martin of Tours community. It ends by calling for an immediate change of mindset in the way we handle our current and fixed assets. To become self-reliant, using diligently what we already have is of paramount importance.

**By Gbantigben Etienne Duut**  
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### *Photo Gallery of the Ejisu Formation House Income generating Project*





## More Photo Gallery of the Ejisu Formation House Income generating Project





## A Missionary of Africa, named and enstooled Chief



Everybody leaves a legacy: some leave a legacy of wealth, others, leave a legacy of kindness and good reputation. Fr. Bill Curran, on the other hand, leaves a legacy that is beyond words. Bill arrived in Lassia-Tuolu in 1986 and was transferred to Yisa Ma Mariama Parish in Savelugu in 2000. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 2021, Bill went to say goodbye to the Lassia-Tuolu parish where he spent 14 years of his missionary life. It was a wonderful day. Basing his homily on the reading of the day, Bill gave a clear and succinct testimony of his missionary vocation among the Birifor tribe in Lassia-Tuolu Parish. Like Joshua, Bill encouraged and admonished the parishioners to make a choice. *“Choose this day whom you will serve, ...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24.15). It

was through this fundamental choice that Bill gave out all his life as ambassador of Christ in serving the people of Lassia-Tuolu in diverse ways: building of schools (22 primary schools) and even the first Senior High Mixed School in the Upper West in the Diocese of Wa. Starting from scratch, together with two other confreres, Bill was able to lay down the basis of a holistic missionary approach in the Ignatius Parish of Lassia-Tuolu.

The warm welcome he received despite the torrential rain showed the type of missionary life he lived and the impact he made on the lives of the parishioners. A great impact, not by preaching alone but by his actions and being. The numerous gifts, powerful and inspirational citations, and above all the chieftaincy title conferred on Bill, speaks volumes of the impact he made on the lives of many in the Parish.

The Holy Mass to say goodbye started at about 10am and ended around 2pm.

What then transpired at Lassia-Tuolu Parish on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 2021? Bill was named and enstooled Birifor Chief by the Chief of Lassia with the title Naa Sansah 1. This name Sansah is a name given to a boy in the Birifor land who comes after the first child who is a boy usually called Sei. Qualities of Bill chanted this day includes: his generosity, simplicity, commitment, love for the parishioners, especially his caring love for the poor and the excluded. A woman in her 60s called Vida gave a very touching testimony, when she shared how Bill fished her out when she lost her parents at a very crucial age of her life. She shared that Bill spotted her when she

was in the Middle School Form One. She lost her mother at the end of the academic year. She was ready contemplating to quit school though unwillingly, because she had lost hope of getting support from anywhere. But Bill encouraged and supported her to continue and never quit. As fate would have it, Vida lost also her dad when she was in her last year in the Middle School. Bill again gave her an unflinching fatherly support and she became finally the first Birifor girl to gain admission into Secondary school. She has made it in life and now is a Head Mistress in a school at Wochau. She made it known to Bill while presenting her gift that she is now a staunch politician and even vying for the post of District Chief Executive in the Wa west district.

Below are some expressions of the citations of Bill, who is briefly described as a missionary with a holistic pastoral approach.

For the parishioners of Lassia-Tuolu Parish, Bill is a living "saint". This explains why many parishioners from across the breadth and length of the Parish braved the heavy downpour of rain and attended to have a glimpse of Fr. Bill for the last time. Furthermore, Bill according to the Parishioners has given them a "bill" that cannot be settled by one person alone. The "bill" of causing a continuous growth in the Catholic faith, the bill of bringing continuous growth and change in the socioeconomic well-being of fellow parishioners and the bill of unconditional love for Jesus Christ and the love of neighbor. They concluded by agreeing with the adage that **to whom**

**much is given, much is expected.**

Among the numerous gifts offered to Bill were the following: a citation from the Parish, a smock and some monies from the Serve Child Centre (formerly known as Chalice or Childcare International), and above all, the chief title Naa Sansa I, conferred upon Bill by the Lassia-Tuolu Birifor Chief Naa Mankyera.

The latter appealed to all the parishioners together with the priests and the Lassia-Tuolu catholic youth to erect a statue of Rev. Fr. Bill in Lassia-Tuolu town. He further appealed to create a Bill Curran Foundation and also a Vocational Technical Institute in the Parish

all in honor of Rev. Fr. Bill.

Many outstations and individuals made donations at the end of the Mass.

Bill was so happy that he has left a bill that will continue to yield interest instead of deficit.

The wonderful celebration came to end at 2pm after the final blessing from Bill to the congregation to bid them goodbye.

**By John-Bosco D. Naaba**



**John-Bosco Naaba**



## Revisiting the Ghana-Nigeria Precapitular Assembly



The GhN Province held its Precapitular Assembly from 18-23 October at TICCS in Tamale. Twenty-nine Confreres attended. The Assembly had as its Moderator Fr. Peter Laast, a former Provincial of the Spiritans in Ghana. It was opened by lighting a candle, symbolising the presence of Christ the Light. The See-Judge-Act methodology had been chosen by the General Council both for the Precapitular meetings and the 2022 Chapter itself. This meeting, being a preparatory for the Chapter, should especially concentrate on the first of these three activities, to look around, see today's situation and become aware of its reality through analysing backgrounds and reasons, which have brought us to this day. And do all this together, by listening to each other so as to reach consensus as much as possible. And do all this as people of faith and hope, bracing themselves for action as they continue their Mission of building up God's Kingdom.

During these five days, the Assembly studied, both in commissions and in plenary meetings, eleven topics. These are Identity and Charism; Spirituality; Community Life; the Confreres; Our Mission; Laudato Si; Evangelisation; Encounter-Dialogue-Ecumenism; Finances; For-

mation and Governance. The secretarial team captured all that was said in the Precap Minutes and the Drafting team made a summary of the discussions per Commission. No doubt, these documents have been dispatched to all concerned.

It is of course an impossible task to give a complete account of what was done and said. I can only mention here relevant points, which might well be taken up by the Chapter. Of course, no need to explain the eleven topics in detail, as they are (should be) ingrained in our missionary hearts. It should be pointed out that many of these topics overlap.

Sorry if your point is not included. When quoting directly from the Minutes, I will use italics.

It was surely not a waste of time. When, at the end of the Precapitular, the participants were asked for an evaluation and appreciation of these five days, there was not a single negative observation. All found these days very enriching and inspiring. Many stressed that it had been an important learning experience, in which everyone fully participated. As someone wrote, *if these ideas we have shared will be implemented, we will get something new*. Another confrere wrote, *I have learnt a lot from confreres and from all our deliberations. We want our Society to move to another level*.

Let us now go through these Minutes and pick out a couple of interesting ide-

as. Understandably, the Meeting first discussed our *Identity and Charism*. These two are of course intimately linked. We are Missionaries, living in intercultural communities of at least three confreres whose primary task is Evangelisation in all ways. We need to engage in dialogue with the people to whom we are sent (besides dialogue with our community members). To do this, we need to learn and use the language of the people. Also to engage in interreligious dialogue on all fronts and enter into dialogue and work together in dialogue with the local Church. It requires *openness to the new realities by reading the signs of the time*, and *thinking beyond the box*, ready to accept new missions, also with MISA and lay people (we will need *to restructure our communities by making a provision for the laity*).

The second item on the agenda was *Spirituality*. *The life of a missionary must be rooted in spirituality; for this we need to be deeply connected to the source, our Lord in the Holy Eucharist*. If we want to live according to the Word of God, let us crosscheck our attitudes towards each other. It should be an attitude of availability. Live our Ignatian spirituality, but be open also to other ways. *Prayer and spiritual life are not an option; it is a MUST*. We are running away from spirituality, and we need to learn again to pray together. *If we lose praying together, we are being*

*doomed.* Also we need to improve on our firmness, ‘brotherly challenge’, wisdom, liturgy. *Our inner conversion matters.* dialogue, confrontation in a healthy way, accepting that *he is our confrere* *This also touches our attitude towards each other.* *and to look on him with love and mercy,*

The Precapitular then looked at Community Life. Obviously our greatest strength is found in our internationality and interculturality, living in communities of three. Our Constitutions and Laws remind us that in the community we are called to have one common agenda of action, to share meals and have time for relaxation together. *The goal is to promote well-balanced, witnessing and viable communities.* We should learn to appreciate each other, take care of the other, be sensitive to one another, and avoid unhealthy competition (*there is a reality of unhealthy competitions*). One of the ways to stimulate community life is to clarify job descriptions. *We need to be honest, sincere and mature in dealing with each other.* Another way is to have regular visits by the Provincial Superior.

The next topic for discussion was entitled The Confreres. It might have been better to say Care of Confreres. There was unanimity that we should indeed take care of them whatever their age and nationality. Many mentioned the ever-increasing need in all Provinces to foresee retirement homes for elderly confreres. We also need to take care of Confreres in difficulties. *No back to sender’.* *Provinces where confreres in difficulties are working should plan for their treatment.* Charity, compassion, firmness, ‘brotherly challenge’, wisdom, dialogue, confrontation in a healthy way, accepting that *he is our confrere* *and to look on him with love and mercy,* all this in order to lead to healing. A good follow-up is required, taking time to properly investigate, and especially our leaders play a role in this. The fifth topic of the Precapitular was Mission. Of course, this theme had already been touched in earlier points. *We should be more and more involved in JPIC-ED.* (e.g. resolution of conflicts among clans and tribes). It would be good to look forward especially to less traditional forms of mission, in Africa but also outside Africa. Mention was made of the issue of migrants, human trafficking, child abuse, prophetic commitments in Europe (to be increased), the use of social media and networking, lobbying for change at the grassroots. Putting up schools at rectorate and parish level. *We could have a Vocational Training Centre in the Province to tackle the reality of our youth.* At this point, the Precapitular was in its fourth day. Evangelisation was the first topic to be discussed, a theme obviously very much connected with the previous topic. *We are ‘nomads for the Gospel’.* *We ought to be audacious to go where there is a need and perhaps where others do not dare to go.* A lot of attention was given to the use of social media, such as personal pages, YouTube, WhatsApp, starting maybe a radio and TV station. There was also a



note of caution: *we need to see if we have the means to carry out new projects.* Training young people was stressed: *focus on the youths to empower them with a trade or skill.* The newly blessed Minna project was cited. Indeed, *the future is bright; it must begin today!* *There is need for another first cycle in the Province.* Possible new places of Evangelisation: Konongo-Mampong Diocese; Accra in the peripheries; Fian; Damongo diocese; Itasa and Oyo; Ogoja diocese. Outside the Province: resume Moslem Dialogue Centre (Belgium); what about Vietnam, Tchad, Mauritania???

The encyclical *Laudato Si* was the next item to be discussed. *Do people know the importance of taking care of our mother earth?* A lot of attention was given to tree-planting: medicinal trees, high trees against storms and firewood trees. All people should participate in this. There is also the fight against pollution, against plastic. Discourage using plastics when wrapping food. Recycling should be encouraged. Offer sessions and seminars (also to our students) on eco-spirituality. When planting trees, also think of fencing and watering. *We should offer alternatives if we tell people: don't cut trees.*

Attention was shifted to *Encounter-Dialogue and Ecumenism*. We need to raise more awareness among confreres that this is also part of our mission. We should foster dialogue between the various religions, ATR, Islam, Protestants such as Pentecostalists. Be aware of religious radicalism. *We need to keep on updating ourselves in as far as new trends are concerned.* Are economic wars being fought under the cover of religion? We should engage in a dialogue of life and a dialogue of faith. *We don't do dialogue, we live it.* The basic principle and starting point is that we are first of all human. *At the human level, we are equipped, but at faith level maybe not.* We should avoid generalising, and be aware of those trying to manipulate Islamic religion, which eventually will harm society.

On the final day of the Precapitular, the first topic to be tackled was the issue of *finances*. The Treasurer reminded the plenary, among many other things, that the Society is committed to care for all its members in sickness and in health. After his introduction, the door was opened for comments and observations. *We are like spoiled babies. What do we give back to the Society? We should start learning to be productive, generous and cooperative from our personal pockets also. Regarding projects, we are often slow in implementing them for reasons often beyond our control. We need to train people to manage them. Procedures for applying for funds (for instance from the Solidarity Fund) need to be clarified and communicated to all. Better to start from small-scale projects to raise funds. At community level there*

should be regular financial reporting. It should be characterised by transparency. *Our financial system is based too much in trust, we need to have the double check system* and also auditing is important. *There should be a memorandum of understanding in case of mismanagement.* Can we reduce our expenses? Also, get support and help from lay people. *Let us not fear to reach out to people to tell them what we need. People are generous when they notice that we are there for them.*

The next item was Formation. It is a priority for us. We are happy that our formation is holistic. An explanation was given how we had to change the first phase formation in Ejisu from three to four years. The KUST (Kumasi University) ceased giving Certificates and Diplomas, and we had no other choice but to go for degrees in Philosophy and Social Sciences. This change brought peace and greater certainty in the Ejisu community. Especially our formation staff need to be specialised and should be capable of teaching at university. There should be a wide-range consultation when appointing confreres for formation. During formation (and afterwards!) language learning should be stressed. Stagiaires should be given sufficient time to learn the local language. They should be helped to feel at home, and be fully involved in the apostolate. They should not be used as catechists. *Our personal ongoing formation must be permanent;*

*we can do a lot ourselves.*

Last but not least, the topic of Governance was dealt with. We are a Society which is structured from the General Council down to what we now call Mega Provinces. This latter idea should be re-evaluated and revised by the Chapter. Each Province has a Charter, which helps the Provincial and his team to administer the Province. It does require a great mobility from the Provincial. *Provincial and Treasurer should visit the communities more often.....therefore create an annual programme for visitation.* It is important that all Confreres always “Think Province” (or, as we often say, “Think Global, not just Local”). There was a general insistence that confreres in leadership positions need not originate from that Province. Ability and experience are far more important criteria! *Power and authority are meant for leadership and not for oppression.*

The final and very important activity of the Precapitular Assembly was electing the representatives of the Ghana-Nigeria Province at the forthcoming Chapter. All participants voted for both the Nigerian Capitulant and the Ghanaian Capitulant. Various rounds were held and the end results were as follows: the two Deputies for the Chapter are: from *Nigeria*, Emmanuel Mambwe and from *Ghana*, Prosper Harelimana. Substitutes are: from *Nigeria*, Pierre Chanel Ulama and from *Ghana*, Yosef Giday.

The Precapitular Assembly was closed GhN Provincial Superior, John Aser- with a vote of thanks to the Moderator bire and to all participants. The Thanksgiv- ing Mass was presided over by the

**Summary by André Schaminée**

## **Prayer for the 2022 Chapter**

God our Father,  
we give you thanks for the 150 years  
of the existence and mission of our Society,  
we thank you for your faithful love,  
for the graces of the Jubilee Year  
and for our confreres Blessed  
Charles, Jean, Alain and Christian,  
witnesses of the power of a love  
that gives itself to the end.  
You never cease to invite us  
to renew our missionary zeal  
faithful to the evangelical intuitions  
of our founder Charles Lavigerie.  
We pray for the 29th General Chapter of the Society,  
grant that we may listen to the Holy Spirit  
to discover new ways of mission.  
Free us from our fears and anxieties,  
confirm us in our mission of “nomads for the Gospel”  
going without fear into the deserts of the world  
to offer to all the only water  
that will quench their thirst,  
your living water.  
Keep us faithful  
to our vocation of servants of dialogue,  
help us to build bridges between people  
and to promote a culture of encounter.  
In the footsteps of Cardinal Lavigerie  
may we become sowers of hope  
in our service to those relegated  
to the peripheries of our societies,  
through Jesus Christ your Son.  
Amen  
Our Lady of Africa,  
you who were in the upper room  
with the disciples  
be with us and pray for us!



## Chapter - 2022 'Emptying Ourselves' for Service



**Christopher Chileshe**

Chapter-2022 comes to help us readjust the understanding of our missionary calling and practice in the Africa of today. The Chapter has already started and will usher us into the subsequent six years. In this article I want to open a conversation on particular areas that the Chapter-2022 could address to make it most relevant and effective in our Province and Society.



The most important and basic expectation from the Chapter-2022 is that it reintroduces us to the In-

carnate God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth who is "Saviour of the whole world, of the natural world and all of its creatures." It is of prime importance that as missionaries we fully embrace the reality that Jesus Christ is truly the Alpha and the Omega (Col 1:15-20) and the "wholeness and *shalom* for all creatures." (p.140)

It follows then that our message as Missionaries of Africa in Ghana and Nigeria is for all, it is a message for the entire Africa in her current and global setting: an Africa that still has fear and respect for God and the good – a dynamic Africa that positively faces challenges from modernity and yet retains her spirit of communality and solidarity - an Africa that maintains the spirit of hospitality and willingness to dialogue with those that are very different from her.

The Chapter-2022 will help us take a leaping ministries in our local Church-leap from the springboard of this Africa es, in those areas where true suffering and realise that in our call to disciple- is being lived and experienced by the ship, “We are united with God in Jesus people of God. It is indeed good to care by being in compassionate solidarity for ourselves; but this should be in view with those who suffer.” (p.126) Our of being able to avail ourselves for missionary calling in the African world sion in the local Churches. The Chapter is about doing good and resisting evil. -2022 should put emphasis on evangelisation before confreres’ self-care and Jesus himself points to this in the sation before confreres’ self-care and words “Anyone who wants to save his the means to do mission. This demands life will lose it; but anyone who loses that each confrere is ready to empty his life for my sake, and for the sake of himself for service and the mission. the gospel, will save it.” (Mk 8:27-35). Our Society is today blessed with a The happy Missionary of Africa is the good number of candidates. Each one of one who therefore, takes self-emptying them is expected to take up an active as a serious part of our identity with role in these challenging pastoral insertions. ‘Missionary labourers’ are on the and in Christ. tions. ‘Missionary labourers’ are on the We will expect that the Chapter-2022 rise and they demand a meaningful will build on our rich experiences in platform to fulfil their missionary call-Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation ing. Time to handover and handover – Encounter and Dialogue (JPIC-ED) again, has today evolved into time to be and further help us to ‘empty ourselves’ innovative and to open new and mean- for service to the African mission. Our ingful insertions. ‘Where there is a will, little Society should fully embrace JPIC there is a way’.

-ED in all spheres of our ministry and Our mission, as inherited from Lavi-apostolates. Besides situating JPIC-ED gerie, is meant to be executed in teams mission in our parishes, the Chapter or communities. The Chapter-2022 will will do well to once again emphasise not lose sight of this vital aspect of our the integration of the ‘IC’ and the ‘ED’ charism. Rather, we should expect to be in this mission. We should pluck up guided towards life-giving communities courage to do Integrity of Creation and that are both a means to our mission Encounter and Dialogue as a response and a witness to our broken African to that inner groaning and eagerness world. Each one of us in the Society will for the Glory of God in our midst. (Rom hopefully become a practical builder of 8:18-23) visible communities. Community life is

Our missionary Society will be pro- about you and me, not about them! gressing when we dare take up chal- If our missionary calling and mission to



the African world is to succeed, the Chapter-2022 will do well to streamline our systems of both ongoing and initial formation.

Ongoing formation and human resource management are areas of great need in our Society today. We should count our strengths and ensure that all the confreres are continually empowered as they begin and progress on the mission. Special attention may have to be given to confreres in their midlife and active ministries. The scope of topics to deal with in the area of ongoing formation has today widened to include; the use of electronic gadgets for mission, human relationships for mission, money for mission, family demands, etc. I hope the Chapter-2022 will answer the question - How can we better respond to the need for ongoing formation for all our confreres?

Our initial formation is lengthy but relevant and meaningful. We have just increased it to 12 years for our Province. It will be a blessing if the Chapter-2022 will address the growing numbers of genuine vocations in parts of the African Church such as in our Province. Vocations are a calling from God, at His own time. The many aspirants we have are definitely an invitation for the Society to invest more in receiving these future missionaries, while they exist. In the case of Ghana/Nigeria Province, it is therefore appropriate to encourage and promote the opening of a second first phase formation house.



The Chapter-2022 will make a stride ahead by encouraging provinces to own institutions of higher learning, prayer and research. These would be of great help in doing mission while at the same time be used for the training and formation of our own confreres and candidates. The rich pool of formators we have would be fully used through such ventures where they can contribute while fulfilling their respective specialisation. The endless search for formators will lessen as they will have avenues of refreshing themselves within their specialisations. Education and human formation were always a part of our missionary story. The Chapter-2022 could reawaken our Society to this important need of higher education and renewal in the African Church.

As we embark on this Society exercise, let us all put in our time and resources to make it the best Chapter in our era. Let it inspire us in our personal and community selfless response to Christ's invitation to serve the suffering and needy of our time and age.

**By Christopher Chileshe**  
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## *Photo Gallery of Christopher and some students*



**The future is green**



## *A Few Random Reflections about the 2022 Chapter*



**André Schaminée**

As we all know, our Society is preparing itself for next year's Chapter. The Provinces have held their precapitular assemblies and these reports will soon reach Rome. A committee of four will summarise them and integrate the numerous ideas and proposals into one working document for the Chapter. As you may know, I will be part of that committee, which necessitated me to reschedule my return to Ghana for January.

As I could not be part of the GhN Precapitular Assembly due to my home leave, I felt challenged and encouraged to entrust a few of my own expectations and hopes to paper.

What follows are a few ideas that have been with me for some time. I have been active during three previous General Chapters, as English Secretary (2004), and as Secretary General (2010 and 2016). To my surprise, I am now being asked to be active again, not during but before the 2022 Chapter. Maybe, that some of the ideas below are also mentioned in one or the other precapitular report. I wish to limit my reflections to three

points, which I consider important and which I hope will be part and parcel of what will be discussed by the Capitulants.

It is in no way my intention in what follows to point fingers at anyone, though one or other point may somehow be relevant to all of us. I cannot propose solutions or a methodology for implementation. All the same, I wish to freewheel through some issues, which are important for our missionary vocation.

Spirituality is of course the basis on which a missionary life is built. It would be good to reflect on this essential component of our lives. Not in order to come up with nice formulations or using principally theological language, but rather to suggest practical suggestions, which will help our personal lives and community life. This is my question: is our spiritual life mainly routine ("spiritual exercises"), just repeating what has been done for 150 years? Shouldn't we be more inventive and challenging, both as individuals and as community?? Furthermore, is the Eucharist indeed the rock on

which to build or is it simply “one of our priestly tasks” to offer our people? Some priests ONLY celebrate the Eucharist when “it is their turn”. If it is not, they enjoy a longer sleep. Mind you, I am not promoting private masses, as the Eucharist is essentially communitarian. All the same, when, for whatever reason, I am unable to join others, I do celebrate the Eucharist just by myself, knowing very well that doing so I am in union with Christ and the whole Church. Still another point on the level of spirituality and community life: how much do we as a community share our experiences, our joys and difficulties with each other in a faithful encounter, animated by the Holy Spirit? Is there real, deep sharing or merely spiritual blabla, afraid as we maybe are to share with others who we really are, and rather prefer to keep a respectable distance from others (as we are asked to do in Corona times)?

The second issue I wish to reflect on concerns our Apostolate. Though I have not made a real inventory or research in this matter, I simply ask the question: how many of us (dare to) preach in the LOCAL language? I have the impression that many use interpreters. Maybe, as Stagiaires we learned the language (we had no choice!!), but since we are back, we shy away and are afraid to take up again language-learning! I hope that the Chapter will emphasise this point as strongly as our Founder did. Lavigerie would not ordain anybody, who could not speak Arabic. There is, I believe, a rule in the Society that “for language learning a minimum of three months and a maximum of six months is foreseen”. Provincials and animators should be more insistent on (re)

learning the language and also closely monitor the progress of the “language learner”, who should only be allowed to begin his apostolate after having successfully passed a tough language exam! The learner will need discipline, perseverance, readiness to laugh with others about the mistakes he is making. He should give his full attention to this and not getting busy with other things (looking for a car to buy for example!!). Of course, at some instances we should speak English, as not everyone present has learned the local language (I myself belong to this category in Tamale)!!

My third and final point, which I beg the Chapter and our leaders to consider seriously, deals with PLANNING. It could well be the weakest quality of the Society! I hesitate to speak about this, because I do not have all the info needed. Of course, one cannot “plan” everything. For example, we cannot “plan” who will be in the next General Council, or even who will be the next Provincial. However, there is all the same a lot that can and should be planned, while remaining flexible enough to change plans when really necessary. I believe that there still exists a “pool” of confreres who could be called upon to work in our formation houses. But such “pools” should also be made for other functions, both at Generalate level and at Provincial level, even if such planning is not made public. On the general level, the G.C. must “plan” ahead of time, who will be the next Secretary General, Administrative Secretary, Archivist, Local Superior and Bursar, Librarian, Petit Echo man, Integrity man, JPIC-ED coordinator. On the provincial level, besides the Provincial who is appointed by the G.C. af-



ter consultation, there should be planning for the next Treasurer, formation staff, local superiors and bursars, parish priests, members of committees, such as Media, JPIC-ED, Vocation Animation, Development Committee, the MISA family, and whatever other committee there may be. It is a long list and of course all this is a big challenge. As I said above, I am unable to offer ready-made solutions. But that should not be an excuse for doing nothing and live a “happy go lucky life”, just “hoping for the best and

preparing for the worst”!

It is my hope, that the Chapter will take time to consider these topics and find realistic and workable procedures, while at the same stressing flexibility and being ready for modifications because of changed circumstances.

**André Schaminée**



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## A Look Back to the Recent Past



I am sitting happily behind my computer in our house in Heythuysen, where I am enjoying thoroughly a few months of rest and “change of activities”. The weather is quite different from what most of you are experiencing. Here autumn is tightening its grips on all of us, and one may be glad if the day temperature reaches 10 or 11 Centigrade. One day there may be a “small sun” shining through the many trees with their beautiful autumn colours, the next day there may be only fog or a drizzle.

In fact, I left Ghana on 15<sup>th</sup> August and should have been back by 26<sup>th</sup> November. But plans had to be changed after the Superior General put me in a committee which is to make a synthesis of all the Society’s Precapitular Reports. This will be done in Rome from 01-19 December. And so I am forced to write these few words while having been absent from Ghana for most of the time covered in this article. Every number of the GhN Link looks back to (some of) the events since the previous number of the Link (for us at the end of May 2020), so that those of you outside the Province are informed about what has happened.

### Movements of Confreres

We are happy that a good number of young and not so young confreres have strengthened our various communities in the Province. At the other side of the coin, also a few confreres left the Province for another assignment or residence.

We were happy to welcome five young confreres into our Province. They are: *Salvator Mbonihankuye* from Burundi, who was appointed to Savelugu. A few years ago, he had already spent a considerable time in Tamale, especially at its hospi-

tal, after the tragic accident that claimed the life of Stagiaire Bruno; *Jean-Pierre Bashombana* from DRC, appointed to Ejigbo; *Patient M Cimanuka* also from DRC, appointed to Ibadan; *Charles Sawadogo* from Burkina Faso, appointed to Bunkpurugu and *Jean-Claude Amani Tresor Lulenga* (DRC), from DRC, appointed to Nakpanduri.

Welcome also to the less young confreres, such as *Otto Katto* from Uganda, appointed as Vocation Animator of the Sector of Nigeria and *Erasto Shayo* from Tanzania, appointed to Agbowo Parish in Ibadan. Welcome back, after a fairly long absence, to *Maralf Jimenez Mendivil* from Mexico, who is now in our community in Wa. We look forward to welcome *Julian Kasiya* from Malawi who will join the Agbowo Community and also *Patrick Obai*, from Kenya who is expected in Ghana at any moment, I believe.

The May 2021 Provincial Council appointed the new stagiaires, *Mathias Chidzondo* from Malawi to Ejigbo; *Henry Naturinda* from Uganda, to Bolgatanga-Soe; *Robert Lukyamuzi* from Uganda, to Wa; *Charles Byiringiro* from Rwanda, to Nakpanduri; *Egide Hatungimana* from Burundi, to Bunkpurugu; *Anaclet T. Kasende* from DRC, to Savelugu; *Antoine Unega Mungujakisa* from DRC, to Agbowo and *Thacien Manizabayo* from Rwanda, to Minna. Welcome to our Province! Together with the four second-year stagiaires, *Gérard Hakizimana* in Savelugu, *Ephraim Muhindo* in Bunkpurugu, *Josaphat Kambale* in Wa and *Wilfrid Kinda* in Agbowo, the stagiaires form now quite a big group.

Within the Province some confreres changed communities. I mentioned already *Maralf*, now in Wa. Furthermore, *Johan Miltenburg* and *John William Nkhoma* moved from Gyedna-Minna to Ibadan, the latter to be engaged in specialist studies. *Jonathan Bahago* was assigned to the Provincial House Community in Tamale. Finally, I wish to mention *Peter Ekutt*, who spent many months in the community of Ejigbo, while waiting for a visa for Belgium. I do not know whether this has already been granted.

On the other hand, also some confreres left the Province. *Erus Tirkey* is back in SOA and is now the Rector of the Aspirants in India; *Georges Kambembo* returned to his Province and *Dieudonné Amani* started studies in Ouagadougou while *Gilbert Rukundo* joined the Generalate community in Rome for studies. Without doubt, the most renowned of those who left the Province is *Bill Curran*, who had set foot on Ghanaian soil in 1969, and was pastorally active in the Diocese of Wa (especially in Lasia Tuolo from 1985-2000) and in the Archdiocese of Tamale (Savelugu from 2000 to 2017). After having said goodbye to these places, during which in Lasia Tuolo he was installed as Chief (see elsewhere in this Link), he left for his home country in September 2021. Thank you, Bill, for the wonderful services you rendered to the places where you were active and the help you gave to the many that knocked on your door!



### Ordinations and Oath Taking

The Ghana Sector did not have any priestly ordinations this year, but there were two such events in the Nigeria Sector. *Cyprian Aondoer* from the Diocese of Gboko was ordained on 26<sup>th</sup> June and *Peter Ijege* from the Diocese of Ogoja on 10<sup>th</sup> July. A third member from our Province, *Dago do Rosario Estima* was ordained in his native Mozambique in July. He had his diaconate experience in Gyedna-Minna and has now returned there as priest

There were two young men, *Deo Angyi Bernard* from Ghana and *Gonsum Rotshak Augustine* from Nigeria, who took the missionary Oath in their house of formation. Welcome to the Society on a permanent basis!!

### Some Significant Events

Of course, many things have happened in the Province since May. I will never succeed to mention them all, that is why the subtitle to this part of the article says “*Some....*”.

From the Society’s point of view, surely the October Precapitular Assembly was one of the most important events in the Province. It elected *Prosper Harelimana* and *Emmanuel Mambwe* to attend the 2022 Chapter as Delegates from the Ghana-Nigeria Province. As substitutes were elected respectively *Yosef Giday* and *Pierre Chanel Ulama*, just in case that something would prevent an elected Delegate to attend. See also the special article about the Precapitular in this number. You also find an article about the farewell of our confrere Bill Curran and his installation as Chief of Lasia Tuolo. Bill returned to his home country for good in September.

The official opening and blessing of our **Lavigerie House** in Gyedna took place on 07<sup>th</sup> November. It was done by the Bishop of Minna Diocese, Bishop Martin Uzoukwu. A plaque captured the event as follows, on top we read *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*, then the event itself is mentioned, and at the end of the plaque we read this thanksgiving, *Let us thank and pray for the General Council and all Missionaries of Africa for building this residence*. Also the **Gyedna Skills Acquisition Centre** was duly blessed by the Bishop. Martin Grenier, the General Assistant from Rome with GhN in his portfolio, attended the blessing and of course many confreres, including the Provincial John Aserbire.

Certain Jubilees in the Dioceses were celebrated and were attended by a number of confreres. We just wish to mention the following, though there are probably more, the Archdiocese of Tamale, St. Victor’s Major Seminary, the Minor Basilica of Navrongo and the SMI Congregation. Apologies if names are missing in this rather random list. Congratulations to all, and as we say in Ghana *more grease to your elbows!!*

**André Schaminée**  
**GhN Provincial Secretary**

## One-Zero Missionary



**Bukuru Venant**

One day, pondering on a comment of a confrere, I decided to forget Zero, his challenges and questions to me and to the Society and took a challenge of ONE. Looking at one as ‘unit’ and not necessarily numerical number, I attempted to understand its relation to nothingness and Zero.<sup>1</sup>

After zero, one can decide to count a progressive numerical one or surrender to the contemplation of ideas. The latter case is an invitation for the wonderers, those in search for meaning, or thrown into the world (...). So, Zero precedes One in all its aspects.

It’s not an “either-or” choice, but simply life as a harmonious composition of opposites, one can maintain the possibility of surrender and of resilience, failure and of success, dying and of resuscitating, nothing and of a potential One. Modestly, the ‘zero-one’ concept is the quest for meaning, and acting on the possible possibilities, the *ratio et fides* relation.

The year 2020 was a clear ‘Zero-One’ in all its meanings.

It was a year of the terrorist ‘Covid-19 busi-

ness’ and of a new missionary venture in Nakpanduri as a new foundation; thus, the cohabitation of the opposites.

Nakpanduri, as Yosef calls it ‘*Number one*’ is my true ‘first’ appointment. We passed our first night there on the September 18, 2020, and the first official Mass was celebrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020. It has marked its year ONE as Rectorate, and self-administered Kashmir<sup>2</sup> of the Navrongo-Bolgatanga diocese.

We are a new creation in an old centre of an old outstation of Bunkpurugu Parish. It’s a new Rectorate in old shelters of the Emmaus Centre. It is one of the newest creations of the Province, close by distance, but a bit far from the eyes (...).

Our number one VIP guest was honorable Norendro Nayak (Kumar), M.Afr. (Tuesday September 22 to 23, 2020), from Savelugu, and the latest guest of honor was Edith N. Yendaw, MSOLA, (7 to 8 November, 2021).

Our Nakpanduri is located in the North East Region, and we enjoy a beautiful landscape situated on the famous Gambaga scarp with many un-exploited touristic places.

The place is rocky but with possibilities of farming. Our first fruit garden was invaded by animals and another attempt of shade trees is in promising process, provided that the fight against fire, animals and children is won. We are in a trial and error situation.

The place is located in a semi-village town, with beautiful people, nice houses, an old and beautiful tarmac cross-road connecting with Bunkpurugu and Togo, Garu and Bolgatanga, Gushegu and Yendi, Gambaga and Walewale. One can thus wonder why it is still in the primary evangelization category. Come and see (...).

We are not fully complying with the recommendation of Lavigerie, our founder on 'the Unit of three'. We celebrated the first anniversary as two in ONE: one from Ethiopia and another from Burundi. Naturally different in many ways, but one as M.Afr. and focused on and in one mission: like a harmonious sweet musical partition.<sup>3</sup>

Many are the discouragements, fears and anxieties like any other 'Unit' of missionar-

ies, but also some specific ones inherent to a new foundation.

However, our *zerness* is not equivalent to doom, because it is upgrading already to ONE. So, the existential nothingness, as potential one, has given a ONE, the fruit of struggles and resilience, inaudibility of timid voices and consolation of brothers, helplessness and support, hopelessness and little successes.

All in all, the pride is not in the successes, possessions or even our bright ideas, but in our nothingness, in letting the grace of God lift us up, to Oneness with Him, to One brotherly concern and sharing, one laughter at our mistakes and plenty attempts.

We pray God to preserve our Society united as one and keep this gift of strong *Esprit de corps* and *Oneness* in us all.

**By Bukuru Venent**

1. See *Ghana-Nigeria Link*, Vol. 4, Issue 4, p. 24.

The comment of a confrere on this article pushed me to upgrade from Zero to ONE. This time, it is in reference to 'Two confreres one community', as a Unit, as One. It comprises the joys and challenges of contemporary foundation, the privilege and honor of being founders (...). By the time this article is being written two confreres are on their way to join us.

2. It's from our usual jokes and humor that myself and Yosef Giday (the Rector), the first team of 'pioneers' to have stayed there.

3. [Glorious by David Archuleta from Meet the Mormons | Cover by One Voice Children's Choir - YouTube](#)

*'It's like a symphony  
Just keep listening  
And pretty soon you'll start  
To figure out your part  
Everyone plays a piece  
And there are melodies  
In each one of us  
Oh it's glorious'*



## REFLECTIONS ON INITIAL FORMATION IN GHANA-NIGERIA



**André Schaminée**

As promised to the Provincial Council Meeting of November 2020, I am happy to write down a few reflections on “*the future of the M.Afr. Society in the Ghana-Nigeria Province*”. When we speak about the future, we need to consider a number of factors, which build up this future and spell out better conditions and ways to foster a smooth and harmonious development forward.

We know very well, that “*the future belongs first of all to the young generation*”, the youth of today. They must be the starting point of our present-day policies and decisions. To be more concrete, when considering the above for our Society, we must necessarily begin with reflecting on vocation and formation. This paper is written from this perspective. I do not claim to have all the answers, or even the needed data that would be helpful in formulating appropriate answers, but if this paper provokes a serious discussion on this topic (whatever be the ultimate outcome), I will have succeeded in my purpose of writing this paper.

From the onset, I wish to emphasise that, even though I limit myself mostly to this Province, many elements are equally (or maybe even more) true and valid for other parts of the Society.

“*He told them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’*” (Luke, 10:2). No doubt, we have been asking and are still beseeching the Lord to do exactly that. But surely, prayer alone is not enough! The Lord would surely be happy to see more labourers enter the harvest fields, but he needs our cooperation to prepare such labourers. Where are our actions? We know that indeed they speak louder than words.

Let me come to the point: a little research shows that there are many young men wanting, for whatever reason, to be “labourers” in the Lord’s vineyard by joining our Society, hoping to be given that opportunity, as they wait patiently at the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour, 6<sup>th</sup> hour, 9<sup>th</sup> hour and even maybe 11<sup>th</sup> hour. There is surely plenty of space for labourers in the Lord’s Vineyard, but, sadly, not enough facilities for these labourers to get prepared for that job!

What is the reality? Both parts of this Province could supply quite a good number of labourers, but at the moment this is not possible, because they cannot be trained for the

work that awaits them. Our philosophy house in Ejisu can take care of only 40 candidates. A few years ago, the philosophy course has been increased from three to four years, which means that the average number of candidates per year cannot go beyond ten ( $4 \times 10 = 40$ ).

See here the prognosis for the future, 2021-2030, offered to us by the Ejisu Rector:

Year	Total #	Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV	To SFC	Remark
2021/2022	40	05	14	10	11	12	1 of Yr 3
2022/2023	40	12	05	14	09	10	1 of Yr 3
2023/2024	40	10	12	05	13	13	
2024/2025	40	13	10	12	05	05	
2025/2026	40	05	13	10	12	12	
2026/2027	40	12	05	13	10	10	
2027/2028	40	10	12	05	13	13	
2028/2029	40	13	10	12	05	05	
2029/2030	40	05	13	10	12	12	

He makes the following pertinent observations: maximum capacity: forty candidates; maximum intake per year: for 2021, 2025, 2029: five; for 2023, 2027: ten; for 2022, 2024, 2027: twelve and for 2024, 2028: thirteen. Of course, a few candidates will probably withdraw or be withdrawn during the year, and in that case, the intake for the following year 1 could then be increased with the number of those left.

Ejisu is “fed” by Ibadan. From 2010 to 2020, a total of 120 aspirants were trained at Ibadan; most of the years they accepted 12 aspirants (six from each Sector), except in 2016 (16), 2019 (14) and 2020 (06). From the beginning it has been agreed that the two parts of the Province would each “fill” half the available places in the aspirancy programme. However, the Ibadan Rector points out that the Vocation Director of Nigeria receives more than one hundred applications per month. Imagine! The number of young men Ibadan can accept depends on the places available in Ejisu. Look at the chart above and the number given for “Year 1” is also the number that Ibadan can take in a year earlier, except if Ibadan would admit a larger number and at the end of the year select only the best of these to match the Ejisu number, and send the others home. I do not find this type of selection respectful, just and fair to the aspirants.

This is not meant to be a scientific paper, and so the figures that follow come mainly from Wikipedia. I just want to make sure that we know what we are talking about.

The Province is made up of two parts: Nigeria and Ghana. Each of these countries has a full-time Vocation Director. Young men, accepted by the Vocation Director, will have a one-year aspirancy programme in Ibadan, Nigeria. At the end of this propaedeutic year, those selected will go to Ejisu, Ghana, for the First Phase programme (philosophy). It may be helpful to say something about these two countries.

**Nigeria**: according to the latest figures, Nigeria has a population of just over 206 million,

increasing every year by roughly 2.60%. In fact, it is the most populous country of Africa (about 17% of the continent's total population). In 2017, almost 20% of Nigerians were aged 15-24 years. The number of Christians is just under 50%, of which a quarter are Catholics (more than 20 million.).

**Ghana:** in 2020 the Ghana population is estimated at just over 31 million. Figures from 2014 state that 76.9 % of its population is Christian; 10.4 % of the population is Catholic (roughly three million).

This means that the two countries together have 23 million Catholics. The attention of the two Vocation Directors is therefore focused on these 23 million, but they are aware that they cannot accept more young men for Ibadan than the number of places in Ejisu the next year.

The harvest is indeed plentiful, but we do not prepare a sufficient number of labourers to gather that harvest, while at the same time praying for more vocations!! Something rather odd, in my eyes.

It seems to me that the time has come to consider seriously the setting up of a full aspirancy and a full First Phase program in each part of the Province. A lot of the needed infrastructure is already there, and I believe that the few unavoidable construction expenses will therefore be reasonable. In Nigeria, Ibadan, which has a philosophy training facility nearby, the house can very easily be adapted to serve as a First Phase Centre, while the aspirancy programme can be transferred to Minna. In Ghana, while Ejisu continues to be the First Phase Centre, the aspirancy programme could be brought back to Morin House. Another attractive possibility is to have just one aspirancy house (in Minna) and two First Phase Centres (Ibadan and Ejisu). The young men would then begin in an "international aspirancy setting". One more possibility is to make both First Phase Centres "international", by letting some Ghanaians have their formation in Ibadan and some Nigerians theirs in Ejisu. Further reflection on these ideas should of course take place so as to come to the best possible and most profitable arrangement.

The idea of a twofold First Phase set-up is of course not new in the Society, as PAC has two First Phase Centres (Ruzizi-Bukavu and Kinshasa) and a propaedeutic (aspirancy) in Goma. To turn again to statistical data, it is said, that, of a population of 70,916,439, there are about 35 million Catholics in RDC, representing about half of the total population. Of course, PAC has two more parts, Rwanda and Burundi. These countries are the home of respectively five and four million Catholics, bringing the total number of Catholics in PAC to 44 million. Granted, it is almost twice as many as in Ghana-Nigeria.

It is a well-known fact that already for a very long time the increasing number of vocations in Africa is a big challenge for the Society, as the number of formators available has not kept up with the increase of vocations. For how many years already has the Society insisted that formation still is the first and greatest task and challenge, as this will guarantee our continued missionary service to "*the African world and wherever our charism is needed*" (2016 General Chapter's Positive Affirmation, C.A. page 17)? There are surely many reasons why this issue is still problematic.



Let me conclude by offering still one more reflection: should the Society, for whatever reason, have to decline our request, let the Province of Ghana-Nigeria then decide to limit its “catchment areas”. It is in my eyes not fair to let the Vocation Director in Nigeria run around the breadth and length of that vast country to end up with the arduous task of selecting every year ONLY three to six young men for Ibadan. The Ghana Vocation Director does not have this problem to the same extent, as distances are far less a problem.

Without wishing to exert unreasonable pressure on the leadership of the Society, I would be happy, if the issues discussed in this paper are at least brought to next year’s General Chapter for common discernment and decision. But already with immediate effect, acknowledging that there is still a great lack of formators, it could be decided to send, already this year 2021, a larger number of young confreres to prepare themselves for their future task of preparing more labourers for the Lord’s Vineyard, where *the harvest is plentiful*.

**Tamale, 04<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

André Schaminée, M.Afr.

GhN Provincial Secretary

This Document was presented

### **Reflections on Initial Formation in Ghana-Nigeria**

The previous Council meeting had accepted an offer from the Secretary to write a reflection paper on the above issue. This document was sent to all P.C.-members on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The Secretary read it and this was followed by some discussion. It was emphasised that if indeed we want to expand our formation possibilities in the Province, we need to send more young confreres to get ready for formation service. In total, we would need about 14 formators if there would be two Propaedeutic and two First Phase Centres, and 11 if Minna would be the only pre-First Phase in the Province. This latter option was preferred.

The Council decided that this Document be sent to all the members of the Ghana-Nigeria Province inside or outside of the Province, of course also to the General Council and to the Secretary of Initial formation. We look forward to get your critical observations and feedback, which will be collated and shared with “Rome”.

**By André Schaminée**

## BLESSING AND INAUGURATION OF LAVIGERIE HOUSE AND GYEDNA SKILLS ACQUISITION CENTRE



**Virgilius Kawama**

The Blessing and Inauguration of Lavigerie House and Gyedna Vocational School / Skills Acquisition Centre took place on the 7<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. Most Rev. Dr. Martin Uzuokwu, Bishop of Minna Catholic Diocese, did the blessing of the Residence, the School, and the Staff Quarter after the Eucharistic Celebration. The Bishop was supported by Martin Grenier (Assistant Superior General), John Aserbire (Provincial Superior), Markos Addise (Sector Bursar), Johan Miltenburg, Julian Kasiya, Patient Cimanuka, Jean-Pierre Bashombana, Victor Shehu, Norbert Issa, Dago Estima, Thacien Manizabayo, and Virgilius Kawama. The first confreres arrived on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November while the last confrere left the house on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021. We felt blessed by our confreres' presence in the house. They gave us spiritual and moral support. Being a Sunday celebration, Diocesan Priests could only join us in the evening after their Sunday commitments. Rev. Sisters were in good attendance. Though being in the house since March 2021, the inauguration marked the official opening of the house and our presence in the Diocese of Minna. The occasion provided a special opportunity for a gathering of the members of the Missionaries of Africa and the Parishioners to mark the joyful event. It was also a moment of thanksgiving to God for all His blessings upon our M.Afr. family, for the gift of the house, and whatever has been achieved in such a short period of our presence in Minna Diocese. We had lots of people: parishioners, friends and neighbors who came to grace the occasion. We budgeted for 400 lay faithful and 50 religious; the attendance was more or less within our target. We were entertained by the Local Mu-

sic Gbagyi Band who made everyone around dance until we stopped them to pave way for cleaning. We believe through the house blessing, more protection from the unnecessary misfortunes is assured.

The Mass was celebrated within our compound. The Bishop in his homily appreciated so much the Missionaries of Africa, whom he felt suit well the very day's gospel about the widow's mite. Like the widow who trusted in Jesus Christ, the Missionaries of Africa have total trust in Jesus Christ too, the reason why they opted for the poor community to evangelize. He advised the people of Gyedna village to take advantage of the development the Missionaries of Africa have brought. The Skills Acquisition Centre / Gyedna Vocational School is for the community empowerment. All com-

munity members should rally behind the White Fathers to make sure what they have started for our good bear fruits that will last for years.

A big thank you to the confreres who attended the ceremony, and those who sent us greetings and prayers for our official entry into the M.Afr. Residence. Much appreciation goes to all those who believed in this project and wished the best of it to the glory of God's Holy Name and for the good name of the Missionaries of Africa. To my dedicated community members, who worked tirelessly to make sure the ceremony became a memorable one, only God can reward your efforts. With your commitment, we were able to witness a wonderful and joyful ceremony from the beginning to the end. It was smooth, worth and enticing.

**Virgilius Kawama, M. Afr.,**





# *Photo Gallery of the Blessing and inauguration of Lavigerie House*





## OUR BELOVED DEPARTED

- 25<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Justin MUSONDA, brother-in-law of Christopher Chileshe.
- 06<sup>th</sup> July 2021 John Bosco DIYUO, uncle of Josephat Diyuo and cousin brother of Patrick Norah.
- 06<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Mma Nkafobele, aunt of Cletus Atindaana.
- 10<sup>th</sup> July 2021 Sylvain Unega, the dad of Antoine Mungujakisa, first-year stagiaire in Ibadan.
- 22 July 2021 Marguérite Niyonkuru, paternal aunt of Venant Bukuru, died at Bikinga-Saga, Burundi, at the age of 84.
- 03<sup>rd</sup> August 2021 Peter Midah, uncle of Victor Shehu.
- 07<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Auntie of Simon Tengban (his father's second wife). Simon is just starting his stage in DRC.
- 07<sup>th</sup> August 2021 The elder brother of Anthony Abu (candidate in Abidjan).
- 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Muhangi Isaac, cousin brother of Henry Naturinda, stagiaire in Bolgatanga. He was only 16 years, and was in fact murdered.
- 19<sup>th</sup> August 2021 The uncle of Norendro Nayak. He was Norendro's father younger brother.
- 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021 Gebreyessus Giday, the father of Yosef Giday.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021 Mike Targett, a younger brother of Mike Targett.
- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 Harlene, the sister of Henk Bonke.
- 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021 Jane Francis, the senior sister of Nicholas Aayire, at the age of 75.
- 02<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 Madeleine Nahishakiye, step-mother of Venant Bukuru.
- 02<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 Anastasia Abobo, aunt of John and Vitus Abobo.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021 Ruphina Bakuri, niece of Joseph Bakuri.
- 07<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Maria Mwa Machumu, grandmother of Jean-Pierre Bashombana Bishikwabo.
- 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Catharine Apuri, mother of Dominic Apee.
- 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Charinaah George Padmore, Cousin of John and Vitus Abobo

*Grant them Eternal Rest  
O Lord!*



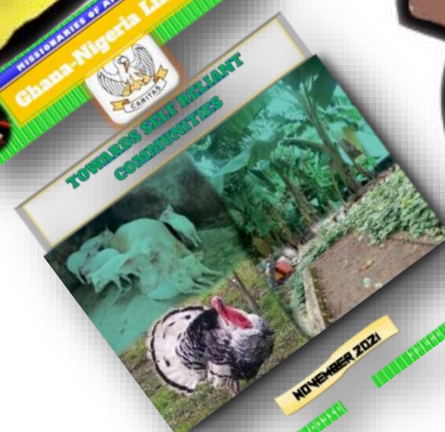
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# Afr. Chap.

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