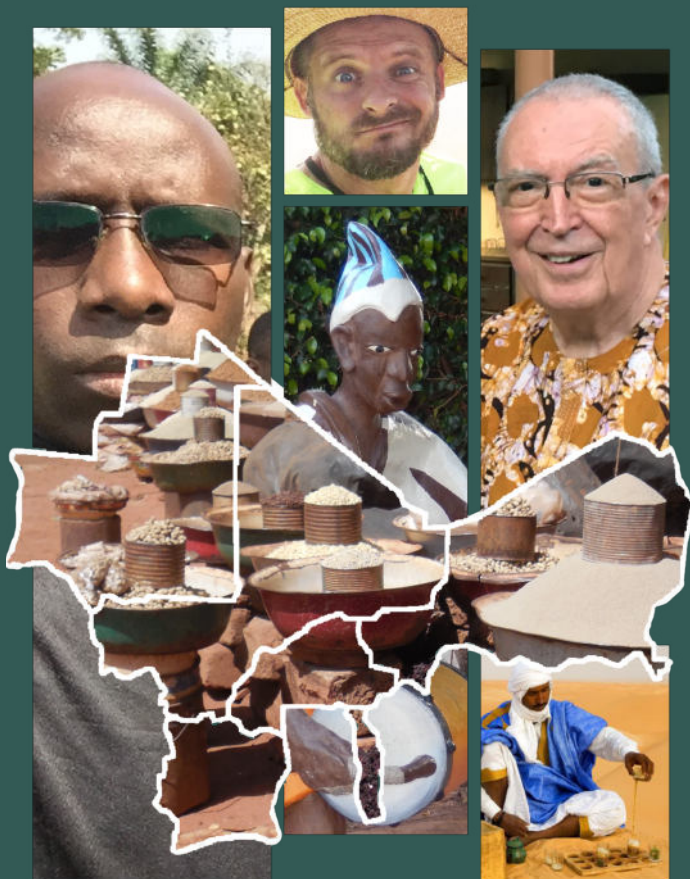


Petit ECHO

2022 / 01

1127

PAO
EAP
PAC
GhN
AMS
PEP
Mgh
SAP
SOA/EPO
GMG



Missionaries of Africa





In 2006, Jean-Claude Cellier published an article in the *Petit Echo* n°3, entitled "A family stays well together". He gives a historical background on the main stages experienced by our Society regarding the foundation of provinces and the spirit that guided their organisation.

The existence of different provinces in a religious institute, Jean-Claude Cellier tells us, is part of the tradition of the Church, and from the very first constitutions of the Society this was explicitly foreseen. This facilitates the government of the missions and the representation at the General Chapters of all the regions where the Society works. He highlights the difficult balance to be found between the right autonomy of the provinces and unity of government, the limits of their attributions, the formation of communities, the animation of the confreres without forgetting the finances. All of this is animated by the desire to keep deeply the family spirit that unites the missionaries across borders, languages, etc. Such were the wishes of the elders in organizing the provinces.

Salvador Muñoz Ledo

Fratelli Tutti n° 231

"everyone has a fundamental role to play in a single great creative project: to write a new page of history, a page full of hope, peace and reconciliation".

SINCE DECEMBER 1912

PETIT ECHO

Society of the
Missionaries of Africa

2021 / 10 n° 1126

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Let's start with : the PAO

Dear confreres,

There is only one day left before the year 2021 draws to a close as I write these few lines. The end of a year is always a good time to look back at the significant events of the year. For my part, looking back at our Generalate Community in Via Aurelia, I thank God for so many things. First of all, what a joy to see that our missionary project in South Sudan has started. Not to mention the joint project with our sisters among the refugees in the Diocese of Arua in Uganda! In addition to this, there were many other things such as the joy of welcoming 34 new confreres to our Missionary Society, the liberation of Sister Gloria Cecilia Narvaez in Mali, the inauguration of our Mission in Gyedna near Abuja, Nigeria, and several other missions here and there in Africa and places "where our charism is needed", and the fact that we held 11 pre-capitular assemblies where the voices of our delegates were heard. The list is long!

On top of this, we have had to face all the challenges of adjustment that the present pandemic has forced us to respond to by discovering, among other things, how to make greater use of new communication technologies in our meetings in order to reduce travel and, as a result, transportation costs and the risks of contracting the COVID virus. A sneaky virus that seems to take pleasure in varying its features in order to thwart our efforts to fight it, efforts that cannot be relaxed, efforts that are in line with the recommendations of the WHO.



**Martin Grenier,
General Assistant**



FOREWORD

On the other hand, there was also the sadness of saying goodbye and entrusting to the inexhaustible love of God 60 of our confreres. Most of them had reached a venerable age; 55 were over 70 years old. Their testimony of missionary life remains a source of inspiration for us. On the other hand, 4 were under 60 years of age. They left us too soon, leaving us at times stunned and reminding us that our life is fragile.

But, the last day of a year offers us a glimpse of the new year knocking at our door. For us, members of the General Council, the upcoming 29th General Chapter will undoubtedly be one of the significant events of 2022. As you know, the preparation of a Chapter requires much effort and consultation, but above all, an attitude of listening to each member of our Society and the to the Spirit. Article 18 of our Constitutions and Laws reminds us of this fundamental point because, in fact, "The power of the Spirit makes us men of hope. We believe in Jesus Christ, our Saviour; we trust in God our Father; we are sure that



Niger, National Road No.1



Inauguration of our mission in Gyedna

the Spirit is at work in those who believe and in the conscience of all mankind. This is the source of our missionary dynamism.

This missionary dynamism is expressed in concrete situations that we encounter in each of our mega-provinces and regions. That is why in the year 2022, the different editions of our *Petit Écho* will offer each mega-province and region the opportunity to share with us testimonies of the missionary life of our confreres. This overview will reveal that our mega-provinces have affirmed themselves over the last few years and developed a new dynamism that is lived daily in each of our communities. A dynamism that needs to be supported and encouraged by our various provincials and their councils. This cannot be done blindly! The statutes that were carefully written and updated regularly in each mega-province are certainly a pledge to ensure good coordination and common discernment on how best to respond to the challenges of the Mission. In short, it is a synodal spirit that is already well established among us.

In this first month of the year, the mega-province of West Africa (better known as PAO) gives us its testimony. During my tenure as an assistant, I had the joy of travelling there a few times and covering endless kilometres between Abidjan and Zinder (2,581 kms) or Atakpamé and Bamako (1,654 kms). Generally, the trips were made with our



confrère Luc Kola, our provincial of the PAO. Luc has been an outstanding guide. He knows well the province entrusted to him and, as a driver, he is indefatigable; he always managed to find a Total gas station where he made sure to fill up his vehicle, a Renault Duster that does not mind about the dust and mud!

Different aspects of the PAO

I invite you all to read the following pages and discover or rediscover the pastoral dynamism experienced at the PAO. In the first place, thanks to Alain Fontaine, you will be reminded of how this mega-province came into being. Bruno Ssenyondo then reminds us how much our Society is still concerned about safeguarding the cultural heritage of where we work. As for inter-religious dialogue with Islam and traditional African religions, our confreres in Hamdallaye, Bamako, tell us clearly that this is and will always be an essential part of our missionary life. Of course, like elsewhere, parish ministry is very present there and requires that we be as inventive as possible to accompany our brothers and sisters properly. It is up to you to discover the meaning of the abbreviation 'MAGS' that our confreres of the parish of Saint John XXIII in Ougadougou created to respond to the

particularities of a so-called personal parish. As for our confreres in Korhogo, they let us know, among other things, that the spirit of *Laudato Si'* is well and truly at work by telling us about the sacred woods, the orchard and four creatures with the eloquent names 'Covid', 'Virus', 'Friday' and 'Pfizer'!

Enjoy your reading! Happy New Year 2022! And may God continue to bless us and help us to remain present to PAO, in this geographical



The Liberation of Sister Gloria Cecilia Narvaez in Mali.



Pope Francis has welcomed Sister Gloria, who was kidnapped in Mali in 2017 and released on 9 October 2021.



-JUBILARIA



SERMENT	ST	NOM
07/04/1952	P	Verstraete Francis
26/06/1952	P	Girard Louis-Phil.
27/06/1952	P	Frayret Michel
27/06/1952	P	Le Vacher Jean-Marie
19/07/1952	P	Arts Pieter-Charles
19/07/1952	P	Duchenne Maurice
19/07/1952	P	Martin Georges
19/07/1952	P	Van Nieuwenhove Jacques
25/07/1952	P	Devrièsère Jean
15/08/1952	F	O'Reilly Patrick



SERMENT	ST	NOM
22/06/1957	P	Bergeron Bernard
22/06/1957	P	LeBlanc Paul
22/06/1957	P	Neault André
26/06/1957	P	Balduz F. Fernando
26/06/1957	P	Brossard René
26/06/1957	P	Donayre B. Francisco
26/06/1957	P	Gaul Robrecht
26/06/1957	P	Wiltgen Gaston
02/07/1957	P	Dumaine Pierre
02/07/1957	P	Hinfelaar Hugo
02/07/1957	P	Lewis Eugene
02/07/1957	P	Nolan Francis
02/07/1957	P	Peters Hans
02/07/1957	P	Vande Walle Remi
06/07/1957	P	Bossuyt Jean-Pierre



ANS 2022 -

NAT	PROV	PAYS	POSTE
Français	PEP	Français	Grenoble
Canada	AMS	Canada	Chicoutimi
Français	PEP	Français	Billère, M. Lavigerie
Français	PEP	Français	Bry-sur-Marne
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Varsenare, Avondrust
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Namur, La Plante
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Namur, La Plante
Belgique	PEP	Nederland	Nijmegen
Français	PEP	Français	Bry-sur-Marne
Great Britain	PEP	Great Britain	London, Little Ealing

NAT	PROV	PAYS	POSTE
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Canada	AMS	Canada	Eastman QC
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Pamplona
Suisse	PEP	Suisse	Veyras
Espagne	Mgh	Tun	Sfax
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Antwerpen, Keizerstr.
Luxembourg	PEP	Français	Bry-sur-Marne
Canada	AMS	Canada	Winnipeg
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Den Haag
Ireland	PEP	Ireland	Dublin
Great Britain	PEP	Great Britain	London, Little Ealing
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Heythuysen
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Varsenare, Kasteel
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Bruxelles, Evere



06/07/1957	P	Goffinet Alex
24/07/1957	F	Savard André
02/09/1957	F	Béal Jean-Camille
02/09/1957	F	Fontaine Gabriel
27/10/1957	F	Föhrmann Matthias

SERMENT	ST	NOM
14/02/1962	P	Bandres Urdaniz José
14/02/1962	P	Chauvineau Jean
14/02/1962	P	Jimeno U. Jesús
14/02/1962	P	Martínez Presa Jesús
17/03/1962	P	Mateo M. José Manuel
23/06/1962	P	Mathieu Jean-Louis
23/06/1962	P	Perreault Luc
23/06/1962	P	Roy Jules
23/06/1962	E	Sainte-Marie Rémi
23/06/1962	P	Vanden Boer Fons
24/06/1962	P	Bouwen Frans
24/06/1962	P	Calcutt Richard
24/06/1962	P	Foucaud Joseph
24/06/1962	P	Geypens Jan
24/06/1962	P	Groenewegen Geert
24/06/1962	P	Hauser Hermann
24/06/1962	P	McGovern Robert
24/06/1962	P	Ochandorena A. Camilo
27/06/1962	P	Hebert Joseph
27/06/1962	P	Larkin Frank
27/06/1962	P	Rohrmayer Josef
27/06/1962	P	Thériault Gaétan
28/06/1962	P	Baumeister Benno
28/06/1962	P	Bertrand Paul
28/06/1962	P	Bondue Jean-Pierre
28/06/1962	P	Broekx Jaak
28/06/1962	P	Lacroix Raymond
28/06/1962	P	Mertens Laurent



Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Namur, La Plante
Canada	AMS	Canada	Québec
Français	PEP	Français	Dunières
Français	PEP	Français	Mours
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	Köln

NAT	PROV	PAYS	POSTE
Espagne	EPO	Ethiopia	Adigrat 1
Français	PEP	Français	Mours
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Barañain
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Barañain
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Benicassim
Canada	AMS	Canada	Montréal
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Canada	SAP	Malawi	Salima
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Antwerpen, Keizerstr.
Belgique	EPO	Jérusalem	Sainte-Anne
Great Britain	PEP	Great Britain	London, Little Ealing
Français	PEP	Français	Mours
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Genk
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Heythuysen
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	Trier
United States	AMS	United States	Washington
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Barañain
United States	AMS	United States	St Petersburg
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	München
Canada	AMS	Canada	Montréal
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	Hechingen
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Namur, La Plante
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Namur, La Plante
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Genk
Canada	AMS	Canada	Sherbrooke
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Borgerhout



28/06/1962	P	Steenackers Jean-Paul
27/07/1962	P	Gieringer Franz
08/08/1962	F	Donders Paul
13/08/1962	F	van Zutphen Lambert
15/08/1962	F	Sorin Paul
03/09/1962	P	de Esteban M. Jesús
04/02/1962	P	Hand Arthur
04/02/1962	F	Nadler Clemens
05/08/1962	F	Janssens Francis



SERMENT	ST	NOM
09/02/1972	P	Gamulani Abdon
02/04/1972	P	Bonet Fuster Manuel
02/04/1972	P	de Bekker Jozef
06/05/1972	P	Beauchet Bernard
06/05/1972	P	Lefebvre Bernard
06/05/1972	P	Revers Helmut
06/05/1972	P	Robitaille Jean-Claude
15/07/1972	P	Rodríguez P. Santiago
28/10/1972	P	Geisseler Oskar
28/10/1972	E	Happe Martin
20/12/1972	P	Buckmaster Ian



SERMENT	ST	NOM
04/04/1997	P	Babaine Venerato
04/04/1997	P	Sompougdou Félix
01/08/1997	F	Baaladong Anthony
16/08/1997	F	Masaba Jean-Bosco
06/12/1997	P	Milombo Grégoire
06/12/1997	P	Muñoz-Ledo R. Salvador
13/12/1997	P	Ngahy James
13/12/1997	P	Sinabisi Roger
13/12/1997	P	Ssekamatte Aloysius



Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Bruxelles, Linthout
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	Trier
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Heythuysen
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Heythuysen
Canada	AMS	Canada	Winnipeg
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Roa
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	Hechingen
Suisse	PEP	Suisse	Fribourg
Belgique	PEP	Belgique	Bruxelles, Ch.Degroux

NAT	PROV	PAYS	POSTE
Malawi	PEP	Italia	Treviglio, Résidence
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	
Nederland	PEP	Nederland	Heythuysen
Français	PEP	Français	Paris, Verlomme
Français	PEP	Français	Mours
Deutschland	PEP	Deutschland	München
United States	AMS	United States	St Petersburg
Espagne	PEP	Espagne	Barañain
Suisse	PEP	Suisse	Veyras
Deutschland	PAO	Mauritanie	Nouakchott
Ireland	PEP	Ireland	Dublin

NAT	PROV	PAYS	POSTE
Uganda	SAP	Zambia	Lusaka, FENZA
Burkina Faso	PAO	Mali	Falajé
Ghana	PAO	Burkina Faso	Ouaga, Maison Provinciale
RD Congo	PAC	Rwanda	Kigali, Maison CML
RD Congo	EPO	Jerusalem	Sainte-Anne
Mexique	GMG	Roma	Maison généralice
Tanzania	SAP	Malawi	Kanengo
Ghana	PEP	Belgique	Bruxelles, Linthout
Uganda	EAP	Kenya	Nairobi, Prov. Team

Odon Kipili, Administrative Secretary



I witnessed the birth of PAO

I have been in Ouagadougou since 2011 as provincial secretary. Previously, I was in Mali, where I served for several years in this same job. So, when in 2006, confreres were invited to reflect on the possibility of creating a new province, I was in the forefront, with the provincial team of Bamako, to participate in all the meetings (provincial councils, forums, meetings of the Sectors, etc.) that would finally lead to the creation of the new province of PAO.

First steps

It all started in 2006 when the two councils decided to meet regularly to consider the creation of a new province. As a result, a new newsletter was launched to cover these transition years: "Lavigerie Infos". There were five issues in all that related to the stages we were to go through. It was the wish of the General Chapter of 2004 to group together the Provinces in Africa (cf. Chapter Acts of 2004, n°6, page 55: To foresee the creation of larger Provinces in Africa). The two Councils of Mali

and Burkina Faso were formal in their approach: it was necessary that all the confreres be prepared and that they welcome this new province as an opportunity for personal and community renewal, with the perspective that the face of the Society would gradually change in the years to come.

In January 2007, a forum was held in Moundasso and Sikasso for all confreres. Before that, the secretaries were in charge of collecting all the confreres' suggestions and information to know better our respective communities and the commitments we have made here and there in the two provinces. It was, both in Sikasso as in Moundasso, an excellent moment for the confreres who came together from the two provinces. They experienced a strong fraternal time, with intense exchanges and moments of prayer. Some expressed their hesitations, their nostalgia, even their opposition. Others were resolutely for it and did not hide it. In short, everyone was listened to, and the moderator, Bill Dyer, an American confrère who has since passed away, was

able to find the words to reconcile everyone and enable us to move forward. He played a great role at that time.

When we started the restructuring process, there was no indication that everything would go faster than expected. On May 24 and 25, 2007, the two Councils met to carefully review everything said during the forums in Moundasso and Sikasso, five months earlier. They came to decisions, as was expected by the confreres everywhere. On Friday, May 25, on the feast of Africa, and with great emotion, during the night I sent an e-mail to the General Council proposing that the new province be set up as soon as possible. The e-mail brought together all the recommendations made at the meeting: dates for the creation of the new province, the name to

be given to this province, the division of the new Sectors, the role of the Sector leaders and their councillors, the choice of where the provincial would be based, ongoing formation in the new province, the roles of the commissions, etc. We must admit that the General Council was surprised by how we did things. Although they were the ones who had to make the final decision, we had already put everything in place to facilitate things. As regards the date chosen for the creation, during the vote, 13 confreres were in favour of July 1, 2008 and 2 for July 1, 2009. The General Council followed the first proposal and the PAO was created on July 1, 2008.

Getting Started

I remained in Mali for two more years, where I worked at the



A major interchange to ease traffic congestion in Ouagadougou



Centre Foi et Rencontre after the creation of PAO. From there, I was asked to move to the city of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso in 2011 to be in charge of the provincial secretariat.

For me, everything was new. I didn't really know Ouagadougou, nor did I speak the language. I quickly found my feet in Ouagadougou, knowing the confreres there since we had had many meetings together to prepare the new province. I was replacing Pierre Béné who was finishing his 10 years at the secretariat and who introduced me to my new work in a region I did not know.

Ouagadougou, commonly called Ouaga, is the capital and largest city of Burkina Faso, with a population of 2.5 million in 2015. By 2020, the population had grown to 2,780,000. It is the cultural, economic and administrative centre of the country. The inhabitants of Ouagadougou are called Ouagalais. Ouagadougou is known to be a very hot city. It is a tropical savannah climate, and this is even more felt with climate change. The harmattan wind blows from the end of November to mid-February and brings with it a cloud of dust that seeps in everywhere.

The provincial house of the PAO is very close to the city centre. This makes it easy to get in and out. We are not far from the airport which is very helpful. The city became the capital of the Mossi Empire in 1441, but it was not until 1881 that it became the permanent residence of the emperors (morho-naba), with Naba Sanem. Districts were quickly built around the imperial palace. They have kept their names to this day: Ouidi, the district of the chief of the cavalry; Dapoya, the district of the freed captives; Paspanga (our district), where the newly crowned emperors go to receive the allegiance of the dignitaries of the Empire, etc.

In Ouagadougou

The city until 2012 had thirty sectors and seventeen villages for five districts: Baskuy, Bogodogo, Boulmiougou, Nongremaasom and Sig-Noghin. However, since the combined legislative and municipal elections of December 2, 2012, the city now has 52 sectors divided into 12 districts. Each district is headed by an elected mayor and has the same powers as the other Burkinabe communes. The expansion of the city is almost visible to the naked eye. With the terrorist attacks, people have re-



Ouagadougou Cathedral after a mass.

cently chosen to leave their villages to settle in the city, even though this does not mean that their situation will improve.

I have always found Ouagadougou to be very welcoming. Different cultures blend in the city and create a unique way of living together. The Catholic Church has trained many civil servants and even ministers, which is reflected in their declarations and ways of doing. With the threat of terrorism in most parts of the country, Ouagadougou appears to be an oasis of peace and serenity. However, in March 2018, it experienced a severe attack in Ouagadougou (the explosion of the State Headquarters of the armed forces in the centre of town and the attack on the French Embassy near the Prime Minister's Office) that caused nu-

merous deaths and injuries. The population is resilient but quickly takes to the streets to protest if provoked. There have been many demonstrations lately to demand more security and other grievances as well.

Besides the provincial secretariat, I participate as much as I can in the life of the Christian community. For a while, I was the secretary of the USMBN, the Union of Major Superiors of Religious of Burkina Faso and Niger. This put me in touch with this world of religious who are very present and very involved in the country. I learned a lot from their contact. When I am called upon I try to respond as well as I can, especially for the animation of retreats and recollections



This has made me discover how much the Church in Burkina-Niger is involved in development and education. It plays a great role, even if, with the insecurity, it cannot play its role as before. It, too, has been hit by kidnappings and looting in zones where there is no security.

My joy, given my advancing age, is, is always finding work to do in the mission which is mine. With the provincial secretariat, I find ample space to engage in all kinds of activities in the service of the Word, which help me and keep me faithful to the call I received more than 50 years ago.

Expectations and challenges

I believe that the confreres of the PAO are very fortunate. Their predecessors prepared the ground well, and the role of the Missionaries of Africa is appreciated in many areas. While one works in the area of encounter and dialogue, another witnesses through his parish ministry, yet another is involved in justice and peace... So much work to do, and God knows just how we are called upon. I see a bright future for the PAO if it knows how to respond to all the expectations of the local Church. It is also a breeding ground for vocations. The young people who



The Filmmakers' Roundabout in Ouagadougou

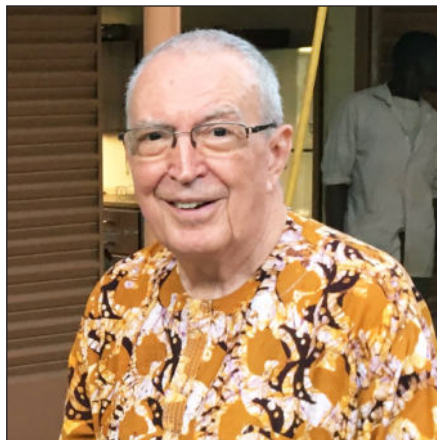
come to our formation houses - and there are three of them in the province - are more and more numerous.

One of the great challenges for our young missionaries today is to take the time to integrate themselves, to learn the language and to get to know the people who welcome them. They must not be discouraged by the slowness, the heat, the relatively modest comfort of our communities ... Let them always remember the words of the Cardinal: "Be apostles, be only that"!

I won't venture to say what I would like to see changed here. However, with the recent trial to mark the 34th anniversary of the death of President Thomas Sankara, I found that there was a lot of emphasis on the need to get at the truth, but on the other hand, one sensed that some people were finding all sorts of reasons to hide what really happened. Many of them are Christians; have they forgotten that Jesus said: "It is the truth that will set you free"?

My happiness

Having spent 40 years in Mali and 11 in Burkina Faso, I am at peace. I have experienced beautiful things and by participating in the creation of the PAO, I have learned so much and been enriched. I have been lucky enough to participate in several foundations in the PAO, its creation, and the Centre Foi et Rencontre in Bamako, where I worked from its opening in 2001 until my arrival in Ouagadougou in 2011.



Alain Fontaine



The community of Hamdallaye - Bamako

The Missionaries of Africa have been present in Mali without interruption for 126 years. Mali is still home to 8 Missionary of Africa communities: Bandiagara, Sikasso, Kadiolo, Nioro du Sahel, Faladjè and three communities in Bamako.

The city, Community and the House

The community of Hamdallaye is one of the three M. Afr communities in Bamako. Bamako is a city built on the Niger River, and access to both banks is through three bridges. Its inhabitants, the Bamakois, were estimated to number 2,700,000 in 2021.

There are three important hills in Bamako: the hill of Power, which houses the presidential palace overlooking the entire city (left bank); the hill of Knowledge, which is home to the official University of Bamako (right bank); and the hill of Wisdom (left bank), where a large private Catholic school is located, named after Mali's first missionary of Africa

Prosper Kamara. The hill of Wisdom was also home to Pius XII minor seminary. It is presently home to the Prosper Kamara High School, the Catholic University of West Africa - University Unit in Bamako (UCAO-UUBa), and the Hamdallaye community, immediately behind the main building of the University. This building consists of five bedrooms and a living room owned by the Archdiocese. Our community shares a chapel with the University for about 100 people, adjacent to our sitting room.

Behind the Residence is a large building where the Faith and Encounter Centre and the Institute for Christian-Islamic Formation (IFIC) are located. The community of Hamdallaye is made up of four confreres: Brother Patient Nshombo Bwanja and Fathers Hans-Joachim Lohre, Basile Essofa Kondoh and Imani Pascal Kapilimba. The community has a good relationship with the University authorities.



We are surrounded by people from all walks of life in Bamako. Most of them live on petty trade; others are civil servants. A group of Christian neighbours come to pray with us every morning, especially on Sundays. The community benefits from the charity of some families who regularly bring food. Malians, in general, are very welcoming and friendly.

Our mission and its challenges

We are a M. Afr. community in charge of the animation of the Centre Foi et Rencontre (CFR) and of the Institut de Formation Islamo-Chrétienne (IFIC). The CFR is a diocesan centre founded in

2001 and entrusted to the M. Afr.. Its objective is to educate, train and instruct Christians, Muslims and people of traditional religion on living together better. The CFR organizes training sessions in parishes that request them and holds conferences on themes related to interreligious issues, with two speakers each time, a Christian and a Muslim, and sometimes a specialist in African Traditional Religion (ATR) to develop a theme. The CFR also accompanies Muslim-Christian families; in fact, about 50% of the marriages in the diocese are blessed with a disparity of cult. The activities of the CFR go beyond the Archdiocese of Bamako, as all the Dioceses ask the



Hans-Joachim Lohre, Basile Kondoh,
Pascal Kapilimba and Patient Nshombo.



The administration of the CFR is financially supported by the Province of West Africa

Centre to conduct training sessions and/or conferences.

The administration of the CFR

Although a structure of the Archdiocese of Bamako, the administration of the CFR is financially supported by the Province of West Africa (PAO), while the CFR applies to various financial partners for funding of its activities, the archdiocese has provided the Centre with buildings that serve as living and working facilities. The CFR is helping the parishes to benefit more from its services. The challenge is in preparing the upcoming generation

when dialogue is not a pastoral priority.

The IFIC

As for the Institut de Formation Islamo-Chrétienne (IFIC), founded by the M. Afr. in 2007, its objective is to help the Christian Church in French-speaking Africa address Christian-Muslim dialogue. IFIC offers an 8-month pastoral training in Islamology and Muslim-Christian relations, built on two axes: an objective presentation based on the fundamental texts of Islam and a Christian reflection on other religions in the perspective of religious plurality inspired by the Se-

cond Vatican Council.

IFIC receives candidates sponsored by the Dioceses, parishes and Protestant Churches and expects them to share their training in their communities of origin. This is not a strategy for evangelizing Muslims, nor is it about the desire to make Muslim friends, but about forming adult Christian communities with their own identity, whether they constitute the majority or the minority of the population.

The administration of the IFIC

It is important to note that IFIC is planning to put up a building for training and formation, with the possibility of accommodating the candidates. The administration of IFIC has begun the work of making the French-speaking African Church more aware through various meetings on the need to get involved in the organization of IFIC and make the Muslim-Christian dialogue a pastoral priority. However, a change in the pastoral

paradigm will be necessary to achieve this.

The two structures, which used to be run by six confreres and a secretary, are run by four confreres from Hamdallaye. It is a daily challenge because there is much to be done but few actors. Hope, which does not deceive, permits us to dream of a bright future.

We would like to discover the real need of the people of Bamako to help them towards Brotherhood, Justice and Peace.



Pascal Kapilimba



Saint John XXIII Parish in Ouagadougou

St. John XXIII Parish is located in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, in West Africa. The city of Ouagadougou has a population of about three million (3,000,000). Half of the population is Muslim; the other half is divided between Christians (Catholics and Protestants) and Traditional African Religions (TAR) followers.

The Parish is located in the archdiocese of Ouagadougou. As far as the Missionaries of Africa are concerned, it is part of the province of West Africa (PAO), sector of Ouagadougou.

It is an urban parish that has existed for more than fifty years. The first Christian community was established in 1969 by Cardinal Paul Zoungana. In 1998, Archbishop Jean-Marie Compaoré, the metropolitan archbishop, canonically erected it as a parish and gave it the name of Pope John XXIII. It was officially baptised St. John XXIII Parish on April 27, 2014, at the canonization of Pope St. John XXIII. The Parish cel-

ebrated its 50th anniversary during the 2020-2021 liturgical year and the closing of the Golden Jubilee on October 31, 2021.

Its particularity is to be a "personal" parish, that is, non-territorial: everything is done in French. The French language is, in fact, the language of the liturgical and pastoral life of the Parish. The Parish is made up of different Movements, Associations and Spirituality Groups (MAGS) assimilated to the Basic Christian Communities (CCB). There are liturgical MAGS: the choirs, the altar servers, the readers, the ushers, collections and security; prayer groups: the coordination of the Marian groups, the friends of the most holy sacrament of the altar, the breviary group, the charismatic renewal, the biblical apostolate; service associations: Social Commission, Health Ministry, Family Ministry, Mother and Father Catechists (PMC), Volunteer Catechists, Interfaith Dialogue, OPM; movements: parish youth, vocation group, Xaveris. Each group and movement organizes



Saint John XXIII Parish

and takes charge of itself. They have their representative on the parish council who directs the Parish with the priests' team.

Our hosts, people with whom we share our life in Ouagadougou, are multicultural and international. St. John XXIII parish is a parish of nations, that is to say, a cross-roads of peoples from different cultures and nations. The Christian community comes from different ethnic groups in Burkina Faso and elsewhere. The parishioners are generous: they take care of 100% of the running of their Parish. Most of the parishioners are civil servants. We also have some expatriates living in Ouagadougou. The Parish is getting younger, with a considerable increase of young people converging on Ouagadougou searching for socio-economic opportunities.

The M. Afr. community

Like any other Missionary of Africa community, the St. John XXIII community is comprised of three confreres and stagiaires. The current team, for the 2021-2022 pastoral year, is composed of the following priests: Dominic Ayine Apee, Ghanaian, parish priest, Innocent Habimana, Rwandan, and Jacques Poirier, Canadian, curates. There are two stagiaires: Evans Dakorah Kuusanyiri, Ghanaian, in his second year of stage and Stefan Sichalwe Danstari, Zambian, in his first year of stage.

Our pastoral life is lived within the framework of the pastoral plan of the archdiocese of Ouagadougou. We journey with the parishioners on the path of holiness following our Master, Jesus Christ (cf. John 14:6). In addition to the ordinary



pastoral ministry of administering the sacraments, we are involved in the areas of Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Islamic-Christian dialogue and ecumenism. We accompany AIDS patients and the youth who are under-achieving in their studies.

Since St. John XXIII parish is a parish of nations, the parish team has the challenge of cultivating and maintaining cohesion between parishioners from different backgrounds, cultures and social levels. The team accompanies the youth in their search for a meaning in life. The issue of insecurity remains a major challenge. In addition to this, there is the health pandemic of covid-19.

Pastoral activities are organized and lived at various group levels in the Parish. Being a personal parish, we do not have a measurable territory for the Parish. The Parish covers the whole city of Ouagadougou. Therefore, we do not have any basic Christian communities (CCEB). The MAGS constitutes the life of the Parish in which the parish fellowship is articulated and lived among the parishioners. It should be acknowledged here that the spirit of commitment of the members of the MAGS constitutes

the very foundation of our pastoral joy. It is beautiful to see that the parishioners take charge, commit themselves for the salvation of their souls and the good pastoral functioning of the Parish. We can count on their commitment. We have almost all the professional skills among the parishioners: architecture, finance, medicine, etc.

Our deepest wish is that Christians live their faith and that together we know our Lord Jesus Christ and reach eternal life: "Eternal life is that they know you, the only true God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (Jn 17:3).

Châtelard-Lyon-France,
December 15, 2021



Kitha Paul Makambi

We were handed a legacy...

You are invited to discover our heritage. It is immense and always in the making, in-between going back to the sources of a well-kept tradition and moving towards the future. I speak of our city of Korhogo, in the north of the Ivory Coast. Its meaning comes from the expression kor-go, which means heritage in the Cebara dialect of the Senufo language. Korhogo is the 4th city of Côte d'Ivoire and, administratively, the capital of the Poro region. It has a population of more than 425,000 inhabitants (2020). Located at the foot of Mount Korhogo, it is the heart of

the Senufo country. The city is also becoming a cultural crossroads mainly made up of the Sénoufo (a Malinké word). Korhogo still cherishes the rich Senufo tradition with several sacred groves in its midst. It is not uncommon to see young boys in town carrying bows, arrows and other artefacts of traditional beliefs, such as masks, drums and wooden statuettes. Covered with a loincloth, they journey back and forth between their daily lives and the sacred grove where they are initiated during seven years. The city of Korhogo has undergone significant administrative and commercial development over the past ten years.

The city is predominantly Muslim but open to other religious denominations. Seven Catholic parishes make up the urban sector of the Archdiocese of Korhogo, created in 1971. Among them, the legacy of our Missionary of Africa confreres, the parish of Our Lady of the Assumption, created in 1980. This parish includes the main church in Korhogo with 16 BCC (Basic Christian Communities) in



Traditional sacrifices



Our house at Korhogo

the city and 12 Christian communities in the countryside.

Our mission is located in the Haoussabougou neighbourhood, a popular neighbourhood with a poor reputation in Korhogo. We live in an old house where more and more our DIY skills come in handy: a tap here, a pipe there, a lamp on the left, an electrical socket on the right and the roof that sometimes has to be patched during the rainy season. We are a community of four confreres: John Asanyire from Ghana, Stephen Kambuku from Malawi, stagiaire Raphael Africanus from Tanzania and me, Pawel Hulecki (made in Poland). And that's not all. At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, we wel-

comed a dog called Covid and a cat called Virus. Over time, the animal community became home to another dog Pfizer and Friday, a female dog who came one day and remained till now. A beautiful vegetable garden, a chicken coop and an orchard with a variety of fruit trees are located behind the mission.

The Senufo people are very welcoming and understanding towards us. Another attitude that characterizes these people is patience. Their rhythm constitutes for us a challenge to which we must adapt in order to journey together. The Senufo people live from agriculture, cotton and trade. The area also has a wealth of



A beautiful vegetable garden

mango and cashew trees.

Legacy and challenges

We continue the legacy of our confreres through the first evangelization in this area. We are learning the local language, which is not at all easy, but we remain one of the few parishes in Korhogo that celebrate in Cebara.

The big challenge is that in the rural communities which are very fragile we do not have trained ca-

techists. To respond to this problem, we organize catechetical sessions in Korhogo for adult and elderly catechumens according to their stage of formation. They must also go through the session "Jesus sets us free", which constitutes a guide for the passage from traditional beliefs to the Christian faith. The catechumens spend a week together and are introduced to the Christian faith.

Some do not continue their formation after receiving baptism. We call them *kasyaattoo* Christians, jokingly referring to those who did not complete their initiation formation. We are conscious that faith is a procedure and that conversion takes years. A growing number of people know about Christ, but it is a superficial knowledge that has not yet penetrated human hearts and changed them. The *Senufos*



Pawel in Tiolelevogo village



Church of Korhogo

are very attached to their beliefs. Social pressure, fear of rejecting fetishes, sacrifices and other practices make people very suspicious of faith in Christ. By nature, the Senufo do not like change; that is why Christianity takes time to penetrate their hearts. Each genuine conversion is of joy to us and a testimony to the person's courage. We concentrate on proclaiming the Good News that liberates us from fear and builds a relationship with God and others based on love and not fear. Another missionary challenge is to reinforce the personal commitment of Christians in the life of their church so that they can genuinely feel responsible for their community on a spiritual, organizational and economic level.

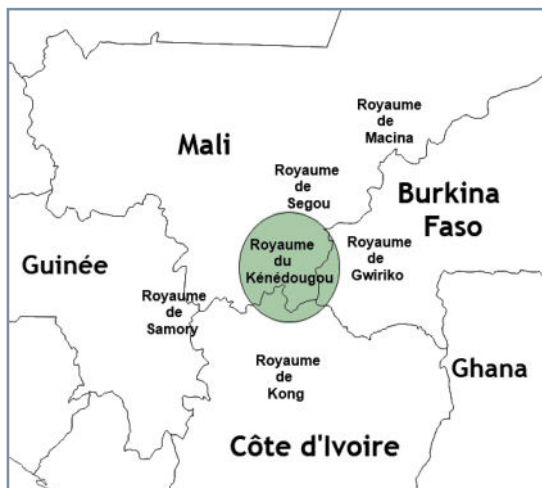
We are not short of work. There are always new initiatives! The latest, which was launched in December 2021, is the 'Ciné Atypique

- Cinéma qui fait réfléchir'. We organize films in view of getting across a message. After each screening, there is a time of sharing where we discuss a proposed topic. We entrust ourselves to your prayers so that... or as the Ivorians say: Let God do his work (All that God has to do is to do his job!)



Pawel Hulecki

A community in the heart of a legendary city



Our Missionary of Africa community is located in the heart of Sikasso, capital of the third administrative region of Mali and stronghold of the historic and prestigious kingdom of Kénédougou, which was, in colonial times, the last bastion of resistance to the French penetration. This green city is commonly called "the breadbasket of Mali" because of its grasslands and trees, as well as its rainfall that is suitable for agriculture (average of 1300mm per year). It covers an area of 76,480 km² and has a population of approxi-

mately 1,800,000 inhabitants spread over 15 districts and 28 associated villages. The city of Sikasso is 40 km from the border with Burkina Faso and 110 km from the border with Côte d'Ivoire. It is the hub of the Senufo people, who are known for their adherence to ancestral practices. There are several other ethnic groups, such as the Minianka who are related to the Senufo, the Dioula, the Samogho, the Peulhs, the Dogon, the Bwa, etc.

The White Fathers community is half a kilometre from the Cathe-



dral parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in Sikasso, officially founded by the Missionaries of Africa in 1947. The parish is celebrating its 75th jubilee this year. It is composed of 13 urban Basic Christian Communities (BCCs) and 12 villages visited regularly. There are five religious communities, of which three are female (SAB, FCIM and Holy Cross) and two are male (Salesians and M. Afr.). Three permanent priests, including a missionary from Africa, Father Nicolas Dyemo, ensure the functioning of the parish. Primary evangelization remains the main apostolate.

In addition to welcoming the M. Afr. stagiaires and various visiting confreres, Father Nicolas is in charge of vocation animation in

Mali. Hence, our M. Afr. community regularly welcomes young aspirants for meetings. We live in a multidisciplinary center called "Centre de Recherche pour la Sauvegarde et la Promotion de la Culture Senufo" (CRSPCS). This centre is the fruit of an apostolate of proximity initiated, under the aegis of the Diocese of Sikasso, by a M. Afr., the late Father Emilio Escudero. The centre is run by two volunteer priests: Father Bruno Ssenyondo, M. Afr. and Father Edouard Coulibaly, with a few employees.

The centre is one of the many treasures of Mali's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It is a great privilege to live in a centre with visitors from various cultures



Research Centre for the Safeguarding and Promotion of the Senufo Culture

and beliefs. We are in regular contact with social and ritual practices, knowledge and skills of traditional crafts, performing arts and oral expressions. It is also an ideal place for interreligious and inter-generational encounters. In a nutshell, through this centre, we discover the uniqueness of the Malian man: simple, welcoming, tolerant, very proud of his culture and origins.

Unfortunately, like the entire Malian people, our population is affected by the insecurity that has paralyzed Mali since the infiltration of armed groups in 2012. Engaging with youth across borders is not an easy task either. Our youth is composed mainly of unemployed people who are sometimes involved

in banditry, excessive delinquency and violent extremism. They are prey to many difficulties, such as trafficking and drug use as well as narcotics. The youth are also a victims of ideological and financial manipulation. Many young people are cut off from their roots, their societal values and ignore ethical codes, civic values and patriotism.

We find it necessary to accompany these fragile youthful victims of an educational system with no prospects. Luckily, a newly ordained confrere, Father Lazare Ndagijimana, supports Father Nicolas, the diocesan youth chaplain!

We, the confreres in Mali, and the entire province (PAO), have two major challenges. The first is



In union of prayer after the kidnapping of Sr Gloria Cecilia Narvaez



Bruno on a tour - Senufo village

that we are victims of our glorious past. There is no Malian who is not aware of the contribution of the missionaries of Africa to the glory of the Church: the first schools, the social and health centres, the commitment to the promotion of women and the improvement of agricultural production are among the many fruits of the work of past missionaries. These successes have made the missionaries of Africa "superstars" so much that, after decades of glory, the tendency is still there to turn to us for various needs. How can we make such fame an asset for our mission today if our contemporaries are slow to change this perception?

The second challenge is about our long-term commitment. Work-

ing within a multi-layered population, we are constantly confronted with a minimum knowledge of the local culture and mentality. This knowledge is acquired over time, except for the exceptionally gifted. Today's missionaries, for various reasons, spend less time than those of the past in their places of apostolic insertion. It is not uncommon that a confrere demands an appointment elsewhere at the end of a three-year mandate. As a result, some do not hesitate to say that we are becoming more and more adventurers, even tourists. Others speak of an insatiable quest for comfort. Yet today's comforts seem to exceed those of our predecessors. Maybe this lack of perseverance originates from the lack of adaptation?



Bruno Ssennyondo



Lavigerie; seven events that illustrate aspects of his character

Talk delivered at the M.G in December 2021

Introduction.

You are all familiar with Lavigerie, some more than others but we have very different attitudes towards him, many of them contradictory. He was, indeed, a very divisive figure and his life was full of paradoxes. For example, his relations with the Algerian government were far from harmonious, particularly in the time of Governor General Macmahon who had invited him to the see of Algiers. Yet Macmahon was a practising Catholic and his wife a benefactor of the orphans adopted by Lavigerie. An incident is related in the obituary of Father Michel Larby. He and Fr Ben Mira Barthélémy were travelling on public transport (presumably a horse drawn omnibus) from Algiers to Tizi Ouzou. They tried to conceal their identity as Pères Blancs but they were identified when the vehicle stopped for a meal for it was a fast day which the rest of the passengers were not observing. They roundly

abused the Fathers and “commençèrent à vomir contre Mgr Lavigerie d’affreuses insultes.” (It might be pointed out that many of the first French settlers in Algeria were not the most honourable of citizens but people whom the civil authorities of Paris had got rid of.) Yet in spite of his clashes with government and settlers, Lavigerie was given an extraordinary state funeral. His corpse was transported in a vessel of the French navy from Algiers to Carthage where, it is said, a hundred thousand people passed before it as it lay in state.

Even among Catholics, a conservative element had long memories and thirty years later had not forgiven him for the toast of Algiers. At the end of the First World War, a young army officer, by the name of Louis Durrieu, decided to join the Society in which he later became Superior General. His father was strongly opposed his son’s decision to join a Society associated with Lavigerie.



The centenary of his birth was an occasion for a civil and religious celebration at Algiers. The Vicar General of the Society, Father Voillard said of him then that there were two different memories of Lavigerie within the Society. One was of a powerful personality without kindness or tenderness. But Voillard protested strongly against this judgement as unjust and false. Those who were close to him perceived in him “treasures of kindness, gentleness and humility”. In a recent survey within the Society, some regarded him as a saint, others were opposed to the idea of his canonisation. That might have been expected for Lavigerie was a remarkable personality but a very complex one and full of inconsistencies.

Therefore, in this talk, I propose to refer to seven incidents from his life which illustrate aspects of his character. Most can be interpreted in different ways but all reveal something of the man underneath the red garbed image of his late portraits. They are not the most important actions of his life but they seem to show some of the contrasting characteristics within his personality. You may be familiar with some of these, others may be new to you. After



describing each one, I hope you will be left with a question, which characteristic can best be attributed to him.

1st incident.

At the age of thirteen Charles Lavigerie announced his intention of becoming a priest. Many years later he described how his father took him to see the Bishop of Bayonne whom they found dressed in a purple cassock and seated on a yellow velvet settee, "And why do you want to become a priest?" the Bishop asked him. Not in the least intimidated, Charles replied, "To be a country parish priest - un curé de campagne".

Lavigerie's father was an anti-clerical freemason His grandfather had been in the army that suppressed the rising in the Vendée against the anti-religious measures of the revolution. His father must surely have been very reluctant to see his most promising son become a member of the clergy. That his father took him to the Bishop at all suggests that his son as determined and strong minded even as a school boy. Also, let us put Charles's ambition into the context of the time. In early nineteenth century, before any industrialisation or modern transport of railways or moto-

rised transport, France was a nation in which the majority of the population consisted of impoverished peasants. One of first missionaries going to eastern bank of Lake Tanganyika remarked that the farmers' living conditions there were not much different from those in his home village. Diocesan seminaries, which had been closed during the Revolution, provided a low level of education. A country parish priest had a lifestyle little different from his peasant parishioners who might be small in number. St Jean Vianney's parish of Ars numbered only two hundred and thirty inhabitants. In one of her letters, St Therese of Lisieux wrote of her horror at learning that a diocesan priest, not a more educated and spiritually trained religious, was to become the chaplain of her convent.

Charles Lavigerie middle class background formed a very small element of the general population. You might compare the situation of Lavigerie's father to that of a successful professional man in today's Dar es Salaam who, having high hopes of his gifted son, discovered that his son wanted to become a village catechist in Sumbawanga.

So was Lavigerie an ambitious



person? Later in the same man lobbied to become Patriarch of Jerusalem and Archbishop of Carthage (when he already had one Archbishopric). When he heard the British government were proposing to the Vatican that the Archbishop of Malta should be made primate of British possessions in Africa, he demanded the title of Primate of Africa for himself. (The primacy of Africa had originally been invested in the Archbishop of Carthage at the time of Pope Leo 1st 440-661.) Did Lavigerie want these positions for himself or in order to serve the faithful better?

He was a humble man who would kneel and ask forgiveness of a young secretary to whom he had spoken impatiently earlier in the day. He chose the diocese of Algiers with its limited resources of clergy and faithful in preference to the rich well populated diocese of Nancy with its hundreds of priests and Sisters. The many decorations he received from France and the Papacy were found tossed into a cupboard after his death. He did not wear them on any of his portraits. He himself composed the epitaph etched on to his tomb in Carthage. They first grandly declared him by his titles: Once

Cardinal Priest, Archbishop of Carthage and Algiers, Primate of Africa, but concluded, now ashes. He was surely realistic about the value of ecclesiastical honours.

The mention of him kneeling to ask forgiveness is a reminder of a custom which used to be part of every General Chapter. When it began, the retiring General Council used to kneel before the capitulants and ask forgiveness for their failings in the leadership of the Society during their mandate. This was the practice until at least 1947, and maybe later, but the tradition has not been followed in recent chapters.

2nd Incident: the Algerian famine.

Lavigerie arrived at his new see in Algiers in the wake of a terrible famine. The previous year the harvest had failed. Locusts had ravaged the olive and fruit trees. Hunger opened the way for epidemics of cholera and typhus. More than a hundred thousand people died from hunger and disease. There are descriptions of unburied corpses littering the roads to Algeria

Lavigerie paid many visits to the sick in hospital but he could



find no way to deal with the crisis until one day, touring his diocese in a small two-wheeled cab, he came across a little boy beside the road covered with vermin and ulcers, dirty and ragged. Coming to a halt, Lavigerie asked him, "Where do you come from, my child?" "From the mountains, a long way off. My father is dead and my mother said to me, 'There is no food here, go to the Christians', so I have come." "Come to my home - I shall take care of you and give you my name, Charles", and he helped the boy climb in beside him. He was suddenly aware what he should do and gave instructions to his parish clergy to collect as many abandoned children as they could find and send them to him. The army brought cartloads of children they had rounded up on the streets in Algiers. The settlers brought him children who had come to them begging for food. Eventually he was responsible for seventeen hundred and fifty three children. Of course, he could not look after them all himself and had insufficient resources in any case. He persuaded Sisters and Jesuits Brothers, and later appointed novices from among the first members of the missionary Societies he founded, to care for them. In the meantime he raised

funds bought food, clothing and other necessities. He loved to visit them and all the children regarded him as their Baba. Some hundreds, too ill to save, died; about two hundred were later reclaimed by their families, and he was left with nearly a thousand to bring up and educate during the years that followed.

This illustrates the breadth of his vision; one small incident alerted him to a much broader need and he had the heart and charity large enough to act on the scale needed. It is rather like when he went to Algiers, he saw it not as a small diocese outside metropolitan France, but at the head of a whole unevangelised continent. Once, crossing the Mediterranean from Marseilles to Algiers in the regular packet boat, a terrific storm arose and the crowded overloaded boat was almost lost. One of the officers, in despair, brandishing a pistol, was on the point of killing himself. Lavigerie not only encouraged the passengers to remain calm but gave them absolution and made them promise that, if they arrived safely, they would make a pilgrimage to Notre Dame d'Afrique. This single incident caused him to institute regular prayers in the basilica for the safety of all travellers by sea.



Lavigerie had habit of universalising his perceptions. He was a man of big ideas: a small incident led him to see a problem on a large scale. The hunger of one small boy and caused him to adopt almost two thousand, one dangerous voyage made him perceive perils of seafarers throughout the world, one small diocese represented the whole of Africa,

3rd incident: Writing Instructions to his missionaries.

The instructions to the first caravans represented a broad education of his missionaries in pastoral methods. He required the learning of local languages, adaptation to local customs (nowadays called inculturation), the practice of community life, the establishment of a four year catechumenate and the training local people as catechists and, eventually, indigenous clergy. He gave detailed instructions of where to site missions, the need to plant fruit trees, vegetables wheat and grapevines, and insisted on paramount need for healthcare in an age before modern medicines. Bishop, later Cardinal, Hinsley was sent by Pope Pius XI in 1928 to instruct the Bishops to be involved in higher education. At Itaga Seminary in Tanganyika, he was given Lavigerie's instructions

to read and a couple of days later pronounced Lavigerie a genius.

But these instructions were by not means entirely original in themselves. Finatou, before the creation of the first novitiate of the Society, had already written to his friends of the need to live like the Arabs and speak Arabic if the missionary work was to be effective. His idea was taken up by Lavigerie who required the first Fathers in North Africa to speak nothing but Arabic after three months in a mission. His insistence on language learning was later extended to those going to Central and East Africa.

Lavigerie's ideas on the catechumenate were first to be found in a doctoral essay he wrote while a student in Paris after his ordination. As we know, it was a system of Christian initiation in the early church in Syria. Even though the circumstances and society were very different from those of the Church in the 19th century, he had the vision to see how the catechumenate could be made relevant and transplanted to the missions in his own time. It is remarkable that this institution has spread not only throughout Africa but to many countries in Europe, especially after the Vatican council. Yet who today, in the Church at large, real-



ises that the initial idea of reviving the catechumenate came from Lavigerie.

The importance of local clergy had already been expounded and attempted in India by Marion de Breillac, the founder of the SMA fathers. However they did not put the policy into effect by founding seminaries as early as did Lavigerie's Society. Even before sending missionaries to central Africa, he had given the opportunity for some of his orphans to join the Society. Two become priests and several others Brothers and novices. Under his impulsion, his Society was in advance of any others in opening African seminaries. Twenty years after the first priests were ordained in Uganda, the Bishop of Salisbury, in what was then Rhodesia, had to employ Dominican Sisters in his seminary because the Jesuits refused to provide him with any staff, believing his plans were premature. Lavigerie's detailed instructions on where to site missions, plant fruit trees, vegetables wheat, grapes etc came from his reading of Stanley, Livingstone, Cameron and others. He vacuumed up ideas and transformed them for his own purposes.

Of course, not all his plans worked out in practice. The building

of Christian villages in North Africa had no long term effect and when copied in East Africa they turned out to be more of an obstacle to evangelisation than a help. What was remarkable is that many of his ideas were practical and realistic although he himself had no pastoral experience in a French parish or of an African mission. What is more, he imparted his own vigour into his Societies whose members energetically put them into practice in spreading the gospel.

4th incident: A judgement on Sisters.

Lavigerie always valued the work of his Sisters. During his early years in Algiers, he said that the work of the Sisters was more important than that of the Fathers because they had much more access to the women and children, to households and families. Later he is on record as saying that he would devote his final years to promoting the Sisters.

Yet we are aware how on several occasions he wanted to dissolve the Msola and would have done so unless he was faced with the tenacity of Sister Salome and her consoeurs. From the first he was extremely demanding of them and instructed their chaplains to make



them above all humble and obedient. One chaplain, in a conference, laid his cloak on the ground and dramatically marched over it, telling the sisters they should be as humble as the cloak, totally subservient and obedient to Providence. Providence meant, of course, Lavigerie.



There is one incident which is not so well known when the Sisters' Congregation had begun to grow in numbers and develop roots and its own character. There were about forty of them at the time. After giving them some tough conferences during a retreat, he called them all to the chapel. Sitting in front of the altar with Father Deguerry beside him, he required each Sister to pass judgement faithfully, under pain of mortal sin, on the virtues of zeal and missionary spirit of each of their fellow Sisters. In front of him, on a table, were two dishes containing black and white balls respectively. Then, one by one, each Sister was called to stand beside him. To judge whether, in her personal life, she met the standards he had laid down, the rest were to come out singly and choose either a black ball or a white ball and place it in an urn. After each round of votes, he counted out the number of black and white balls and, if answer was not sufficiently positive, the Sister standing there was told to leave the chapel and the Congregation on the spot. A dozen were expelled in this way. There was much weeping both on the part of those excluded and of all the others who, perhaps under the influence of the retreat conferences, had been very



severe in their judgements. Once the process was concluded, Sister Salome begged him to change at least some of his decisions, but he categorically refused. The whole performance must have been a traumatic experience for them all, including for Lavigerie himself. In any case, he said he would never go through that process again. Maybe he realised he had gone too far. Certainly he was much kinder to the Sisters afterwards. He never imposed on them the extreme poverty he expected of the first clerical novices who sat on the floor for their simple meals and, when ordained and appointed to Kabylia, were housed in abandoned leaky huts without furniture and only a hole in the floor for a kitchen. When a house in Lyon was purchased for the Sisters, he arrived at the house before them and prepared a huge saucepan of stew to welcome the first cold and tired arrivals. Sr Claude Marie, a later Superior General wrote, *S'il avait été Père auparavant, il était surtout Mère dans ces derniers temps de sa vie* »

5th incident.

A few years ago, a community was visited by some novices over Christmas time. When we discussed the possible canonisation of La-

vigerie, they were unanimous in asserting that he should not be canonised because he was “too authoritarian”. Was he?

There are a number of occasions when his wishes were opposed by the Fathers even when still novices or scholastics. Well known examples are the two occasions when he wanted to close down their Society. But in devising the rules of the Society, he gave way to the novices who did not want it to have a monastic character. The first novices took vows but persuaded Lavigerie to replace them with an oath which was first taken in 1872. The practices of the culpa and fraternal correction, common in the older religious orders and introduced by the first novice master, were abandoned at the wishes of the novices, although two of the first candidates, Pux and Barbier, had been expelled for refusing to take part in the culpa. The relevant rules were changed against Lavigerie's preferences.

The General Council at first refused to accept St Anne's at Jerusalem, and refused absolutely to follow him to Carthage to his bitter disappointment. They were afraid that members of the Society would be made to supply for the fewness of the clergy there. In per-



sonal relationships with successive Vicars General he preferred men who would not oppose him. He insisted on Deguerry several times accepting re-election to the post of Vicar General despite his unwillingness. Deguerry had his own ideas of how he would like to lead the Society and became so frustrated at being overruled by Lavigerie that, in the end, he left the Society. His departure was occasioned rather than caused by the argument about proceeds from the sale of a school. Deguerry was the last surviving member of the first novitiate, and in spite of the many appeals of his confrères, he never returned to the Society, much to the sorrow of Lavigerie himself. He refused even the plea from the Chapter which followed Lavigerie's death. Charbonnier also was elected for a term as Vicar General but he was a different and much stronger character, not so easily intimidated. So when he told Lavigerie he did not want a second term, Lavigerie readily agreed.

Lavigerie had a great love of children. At one time he even suggested that he would like to be buried among the orphans. The junior seminary in Algiers was visited by him frequently. He taught the boys songs he had learned in

his younger days and corresponded with the seminarians when they were on holiday. All the same he was not averse to giving some of them a sound beating when, at the end of each term they had to report to him, sometimes with poor marks. (The practice might be illegal today but was universal in his time.)

So was he as authoritarian as his received reputation suggests? He certainly acted occasionally in an imperious and commanding way, but some have suggested it was a sign of weakness rather than of strength.

6th incident: Lavigerie's attitude to money.

He had ambitious programmes for his Archdiocese and his Societies and was frequently in financial difficulties. In that situation he remarked that he would have been liked to have been rich. In fact, it would have taken a very rich man to finance all the projects he initiated: the support of his orphans, building schools and churches in the archdiocese of Algiers, providing for the missionary caravans into the heart of Africa, his campaigns and his travels, all needed vast amounts of money. When he came to Rome on his many visits he at least sometimes

stayed in one of the most expensive hotels, but according to the mentality of the time he had to keep up appearances as a Cardinal. On one safari, returning to North Africa from Paris, he arrived too late at a railway station and so ordered a special train to Marseilles. (That was a practice not uncommon at the time even if unthinkable today.) Nevertheless his own lifestyle in Algiers was simple and his meals frugal.

He understood the value of money and expected his missionaries to be extremely careful in using it. Collecting funds was a task which they disliked and he understood why from his own experience. For as a young priest he had had the task of collect funds for the Eastern Schools and he had often been humiliated by the refusals of parish priests and wealthy people. All the same, he insisted on their performance of this part of their work.

This raises the question on how to evaluate money in the work of a missionary today. Policies and practice vary from diocese to diocese. There are Fathers who dispense large amounts provided by European benefactors. But in some dioceses, this is not acceptable. There is a policy absolutely against

paternalism and because of the problems created for diocesan priests when they take over a parish from our Fathers.





7th incident

There is a well known incident of Lavigerie, towards the end of his life, meeting the parish priest who had given him first communion and the bishop who had confirmed him. Walking along the beach together a few kilometres from Bayonne, the Bishop remarked that Lavigerie looked the oldest of the three. Lavigerie protested that length of life could be measured in years or in kilometres. He excused his appearance by pointing out that while being young than his companions, he had travelled tens of thousands of kilometres more. Some years previously, in the dedication of his Oeuvres Choiesies, he wrote that his love of God and of so many poor abandoned people, which had sustained him in all the difficulties of his work, had worn him out before his time.

For much of his life, Lavigerie was a dynamic source of activity and energy. At other times he became deeply depressed. More than one observer has suggested that he was bipolar.

I discussed this with our psychologist in the Generalate community and he argued convincingly that Lavigerie was not in any clini-

cal sense bipolar. There were mood swings as in everyone's life, apparently more acute in Lavigerie's life. But his very activity sometimes left him tired and drained of energy. He died prematurely a few weeks after his sixty-seventh birthday, exhausted and worn out from his exertions.

Although very active, he had not neglected his prayer life, rising very early for two hours of prayer every morning and usually finding time for a further period of prayer in the evening. Would he have been wiser to take life easier? He once remarked that his idea of hell was having nothing to do.

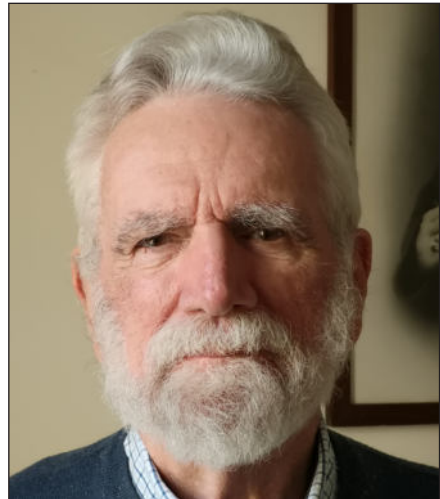
In conclusion, this is how Father Charmetant, who probably knew him better than anyone, describes him: "An astonishing mixture of enthusiasm and practicality, of passion and tranquillity, of exuberance and self-control. He did not like to be crossed, but he listened willingly to advice which seemed to him wise, transforming it, and then re-formulating it in broader and more practical terms and presenting it as his own. A man at once great and simple. He like everything around him to be grand, and he could assume the grand manner on official occasions, when nothing could be too splendid, but

he was himself of a natural simplicity which shunned all affectation.” From Notes sur le Cardinal Lavigerie (A/7-2 in MG archives)

A question

After the talk above, a member of the audience asked, what would Lavigerie think of us today. Who could say? I could reply only be referring to a statement he made on 11th November 1874 in a circular letter addressed to his missionaries. “Before finishing this letter, which will be, perhaps, the last direct communication I shall address to you, I should like, my very dear sons, to make three recommendations to you. It seems to me that all three are necessary for the success and continuation of your work. The first of these is that you never lose sight of the

character and spirit proper to the Society. The Society has a special purpose which it cannot abandon without losing its *raison d’être*. It is destined to the infidels of Africa. It cannot and ought not undertake anything which has any other aim.” Perhaps the Chapter of 2022 will keep these words in mind.



Francis Nolan



Jacques Palasse 1930 - 2021



Born in:	Lac-au-Saumon 21/05/1930
Sp. Year:	St-Martin, Canada, 21/02/1948
Oath:	St-Martin, Canada, 18/02/1950
Priesthood:	Luceville, Canada, 12/05/1973
Died at:	Shedbrooke, Canada, 22/08/2021

Father Jacques Palasse was born on May 21, 1930 in Saint-Edmond du Lac-au-Saumon, in the Diocese of Rimouski, in Canada. He was the son of Pierre Palasse and Anna Vézina. Jacques attended the Sacré-Coeur school in Rimouski and studied graphic arts in Montreal. He joined the postulancy of the White Fathers on August 10, 1947, and continued to the St. Martin de Laval novitiate on February 21, 1948. He took his first oath as a Missionary of Africa Brother on February 18, 1950, followed by a three-year oath on January 31, 1953. His perpetual oath was on January 31, 1956.

In July 1950, Jacques decided to study printing and stayed at the St-Hubert community in Montreal. A year later, he was appointed to take care of our bulletin "Mission d'Afrique" which was published in Quebec. He then went to Franklin, in the United States, to study English before returning to Montreal to pursue his studies in graphic arts.

Before he left for Africa, our confrere spent four months in Dorking, Great Britain, to perfect his knowledge of English. From there, he flew to Malawi, where he worked as a missionary for 54 years.



54 years in Malawi

He first worked at the Likuni Printing Press, which he headed for 13 years. His work as a printer was truly professional. He did not limit his work to that of a business manager. He took great interest in the welfare of his workers, about twenty of them, and became their spiritual director. He was also a member of the regional council for a year. He considered becoming a deacon in order to make his pastoral work even more profound and effective. The excellent relations with the Africans, relations marked by courtesy, justice and the lack of complacency, helped him in his work. He was at ease with both the uneducated villagers and the members of parliament who had recourse to his services as a printer. He was highly regarded. He was trusted, and many people liked to confide in him.

Brother Palasse applied to become a priest in 1970. In fact, he had the desire to become a priest since his youth. He had begun his studies in that direction but had to abandon the classical course after three years due to lack of money. He returned to Canada, where he studied for one year in Montreal and three years in Eastview, at the

White Fathers' scholasticate in the suburbs of Ottawa.

Jacques pursued his theological studies with seriousness and was highly esteemed among the students. He exhibited excellent leadership qualities. This stemmed naturally from the sympathy he radiated, his simplicity, detachment, the ease with which he related with others, and his openness to others, evident in his desire to listen and serve. He was ordained a priest on May 12, 1973. Three months later, he returned to Malawi where he ministered both as a curate and parish priest in various parishes in Lilongwe. Jacques spent his last 15 years in Malawi as a chaplain at Likuni Hospital.

Return to Canada

On May 31, 2014, he went to Quebec for his home leave and hoped to return to Malawi; he even had his return ticket! He spent several months in Lennoxville for medical issues; his eyes had been causing him problems related to glaucoma for several years. He was supposed to return to Malawi by the end of February 2015, as his resident permit was about to expire. However, as the weeks passed, going back became more and more problematic given the



condition of his eyes; it was with immense sadness that he finally had to forgo one last trip to Africa to say goodbye and collect his belongings.

In Lennoxville

He then asked the provincial to appoint him to Lennoxville to benefit from community life and receive good medical care. It was there that he was assigned on February 4, 2015. Despite all the care he received, Jacques gradually lost his sight until he became blind.

In September 2020, he moved with all the confreres of Lennoxville to the Residence "Les Terrasses Bowen", in the center of Sherbrooke. Because of his visual impairment, Jacques had to be accompanied whenever he moved. He stayed at the Oasis, the infirmary of the Residence.

On August 12, 2021, Jacques was taken to Hôtel-Dieu de Sherbrooke in an ambulance. He had lost a lot of weight and could no longer move around by himself. He often repeated that he was ready to die. He returned to the Bowen Residence the next day after a medical evaluation. He stayed on the 4th floor of the Oasis, where he received comfort and care.

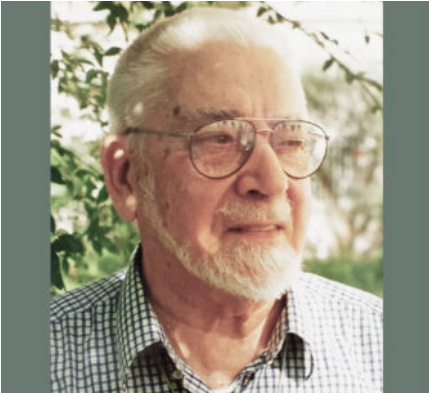
His energy was failing rapidly. He was getting ready to meet the Lord whom he had generously served in Malawi and Quebec. He prayed his rosary with great piety every day. Our confrere Jacques died peacefully on Sunday evening, August 22, 2021. May the Lord grant him eternal rest with Him in His Kingdom!

Jacques Charron





Paul Ryckelynck 1921 - 2021



Born in:	Valenciennes, France 16/11/1921
Sp. Year:	Carthage, Tunisia 25/09/1946
Oath:	Thibar, Tunisia 27/06/1950
Priesthood:	Carthage, Tunisia 24/03/1951
Died at:	Bry-sur-Mame, France 16/06/2021

Paul Ryckelynck was born on November 16, 1921, in Valenciennes. His parish priest said of his parents, Victor and Jeanne, that they "constituted one of the best families in the parish". Little Paul was thus born and raised in a deeply Christian environment. He received a good education in Catholic institutions, first in Valenciennes, then in Belgium, then again in Valenciennes, where he obtained his baccalaureate in 1939 when the Second World War broke out, and when he was about to apply for admission to Kerlois. He stayed behind to help his father in his business because his two brothers had been mobilized and sent to the front.

When the German army invaded, the family fled to the south and found refuge in Brives. Young Paul then joined the 'youth work camps'. When he was released in November 1941, he could not contact the White Fathers in France, so he applied to be admitted to Maison-Carrée. He took a boat to Tunis in April 1942 and joined the group of philosophers in Thibar. However, the Americans landed in the Maghreb in November, and the French scholastics were mobilized. Paul took part in the Italian, French and German campaigns with the rank of sergeant in charge of transmissions and was awarded the 'Croix de Guerre' after heroic action at the crossing of the Rhine.



He returned to Thibar in 1945 to finish his philosophy studies and to do his novitiate. The novices were so many in 1946 that the novitiate was split (75 at Maison-Carrée and 72 at Thibar!). He later returned to Thibar to begin his theological studies. It was there that he took his missionary oath on June 27, 1950. He would then complete his formation at the Saint-Louis scholasticate in Carthage, and was ordained a priest on March 24, 1951. Despite his poor health and difficulty in studies throughout his formative years, Paul proved to be a balanced, calm, thoughtful, generous,

and a spiritual person, showing good practical and organizational skills. He was well accepted in the community where he had a good influence on his confreres. One could sense that he would become a good missionary.

On mission in Mali and France

His first appointment was to Mali, to the Diocese of Mopti, where he spent some 12 years, first in Ségué, then in Pel, before returning to Ségué, after a short stay in Mopti. With courage, he began to learn the Dogon language, which was difficult for a European to master; he began to visit the vil-



The Great Mosque of Mopti



lages and devoted himself mainly to the service of youth. He was rather unsure of himself and inclined to work alone, but everyone appreciated his apostolic zeal and his jovial nature in the community. He would spend a dozen years among the Dogons, interrupted by a sick leave that required the removal of his spleen following a motorcycle accident. He was popular; his frankness was appreciated but sometimes caused him trouble, to the point that in 1963, he was expelled by the Malian authorities for criticizing situations that seemed unjust and that he could not bear.

He did the 30 day Ignatian retreat in Cavaletti in Rome and was then sent to Sainte-Foy-lès-Lyon, where he collaborated with the confreres in missionary animation. Even though he was far from his native North and even further from Africa, he put his heart into it.

Then in Burkina Faso

The superiors did not forget him. In 1967, he received a new appointment for the East Volta Region, where he remained for about thirty years in the Diocese of Ouahigouya. He began by learning the language Moore and quickly got down to work. He worked in

Bourzanga, Titao, Baam-Kongoussi, Seghenega and the cathedral of Ouahigouya. He was a man who gave himself totally to what he was doing. His generosity was tremendous, and his availability knew no bounds. He preferred rural parishes to the urban apostolate.

Despite his poor command of Mooré, Paul did a lot of good wherever he went. He especially enjoyed going to the outstations, where he was much appreciated. But this headstrong man sometimes got caught up in imprudent words or actions in the name of justice, and the bishop who appreciated him was bound to go to his rescue. However, work was not the only thing in Paul's life. He knew how to take long moments for prayer, and he enjoyed community life very much. The confreres knew him and accepted his impulsive character, which did not prevent them from loving the one they called "Popaul" and with whom it was good to live.

Popaul was getting older. In 1983 he went for renewal in Jerusalem, and he spent more and more time in the hands of doctors during his subsequent leaves, to the point that he sometimes had to extend his stays in France. In 1993, the



Regional of Burkina suggested to him that it would be better to start thinking about a definitive return to the land of his forefathers. He eventually left his beloved Burkinabes in 1997. He was lucid about his condition and the need for regular care, so it was without bitterness that he considered reintegrating himself into his region of origin, where he had a large family.

And finally in France

At first, he stayed in the community of Lille. He was the receptionist there while accompanying the Friends of the White Fathers. He became involved in the community's various activities, of which he accepted the responsibility in 1999, until 2002 when he was appointed to Mours, where he stayed for only two years. He took the opportunity to invite many friends and family members to celebrate his 50th anniversary of priesthood with dignity before going to his last community, in Bry-sur-Marne.

He arrived in Bry on June 1, 2004. He gradually sank into a kind of lethargy, and unfortunately, even became bedridden. But the nursing staff loved him very much, perhaps because in his loud ramblings, he was more often in Africa than at Bry. Sometimes, when a confrère he knew in Burkina visited him, he would be alert and happy about the visit. But these flashes of clarity became increasingly rare. Whilst the community was already making some preparations to celebrate his centenary in the November he passed away quietly on June 16, 2021. The funeral was celebrated in the parish church in the presence of confreres and many of his family members. Father Michel Girard presided over the mass; he also gave the homily before accompanying him to join the 167 confreres buried in the Bry cemetery. May he rest in peace!

François Richard



Stanislas de Jamblinne de Meux 1922 - 2021



Born in:	Brussels, Belgium 14/07/1922
Sp. Year:	Bruges, Belgium 22/09/1943
Oath:	Heverlee, Belgium 06/04/1947
Priesthood:	Heverlee, Belgium 29/03/1948
Died at:	Brussels, Belgium 12/11/2021

Stanislas, called Stany since his childhood, was born on July 14, 1922, in Brussels. He did his secondary school studies at the St-Jean-Berchmans College, where he received the totem of Mischievous Rabbit from the scouts. He joined the White Fathers in Thy-le-Château in September 1941. After the novitiate in Varsenare, he studied theology in Heverlee and Marienthal. Stany proved to be a devoted and generous man who "found pleasure in serving"; he was a man of remarkable simplicity - a little too careless for some. He was an open-minded, pleasant confrere, gifted with great common sense, but "who risked being easily absorbed by the material". He took the missionary oath in Heverlee on

April 6, 1947, and was ordained a priest there on March 29, 1948.

Many Years in Rwanda

He was appointed to Rwanda and started in September 1948 in Rwaza as director of schools. To learn the language, "from the very first day he would walk with the children", according to Father Hellemans, the regional superior. After two years in Kansi, Stany became parish priest of Ruskaki in 1953, a newly founded parish where everything had to be built. He knew how to trust his workers, whom he trained. Stany was the parish priest in Byumba in 1956. And after his first home leave in 1958, parish priest in Cyanika, where he stayed for 16 years; he



built different outstations: a church in Mbuga, as well as the hospital and the sisters' house; a church in Kirambi, where he also built the hospital and the sisters' convent. He took care of roads, built silos and bridges. He knew how to make others work, whether confreres, employees or workers and set the example himself. Each confrere was in charge of a sector of the parish, but all the work was coordinated in the community council. He trained several young confreres. He proved to be a man of standing during the ethnic difficulties of 1963, when he protected the persecuted, whoever they were.

Stany comments at length and in detail on the events in his diary: the rumours of possible attacks by the Inyenzi, the order that circulated that all Batutsi should be killed. Stany, with the parish buildings full of refugees, preached peace and declared openly: "They can kill me, but I will not throw out a refugee. Years later, survivors would pay him this tribute: "Father, we whom you saved, we who owe you our lives, we thank you with all our hearts for your wisdom, for your compassion, for your love and the gift of yourself, for the courage

you showed for us during the difficult times our country went through.

When he returned from leave in November 1976, he helped the Pallottine Fathers to found the parish of Gikongoro. The following year he was appointed to Kaduha, where he opened two road links to two outstations. These projects and many others placed him in close contact with the authorities, but also with the ordinary people whom he gave work "with a remarkable kindness and spirit of service, which did not exclude a solid sense of business and tangible and visible achievements" (Dominique Mallet, regional).

In September 1981, Stany participated in the retreat in Jerusalem. On his return, he was sent to Rusumo (Kibungo). When refugees from Uganda settled in the parish, He took care of them, as usual, with care and conviction. On January 1, 1988, the government awarded him the National Order of Peace medal.

Upon returning from home leave in September 1991, he was appointed curate in Runaba (Diocese of Ruhengeri). Remember that the first RPF attacks took place in the northeast of the coun-



try on October 1, 1990. Towards the end of January 1992, the so-called Inkotanyi tried to seize the commune of Butaro, close to the parish. Our confreres spent the day at the parish. Still, they went to stay elsewhere for the night, as did the entire population who left around 4-5 p.m. Stany built temporary facilities during the peace talks, i.e. schools and dispensaries with plastic covering. He took part in the feeding of the displaced. In March 1993, the fathers moved to our house in Kigali... and Stany took the opportunity to go on home leave and receive medical treatment.

A short time in Burundi

In July 1994, he looked after the Rwandan refugees on the other side of the border, in Burundi. On his return to Rwanda, he helped out in several communities that were lacking in personnel: Nyagahanga - from which he wrote: "We are a fragile community, but it is in fragility that the Kingdom takes root", then Rushaki, Rwaza and back to Nyagahanga. He was awarded the honorary distinction Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice by Pope John Paul II in November 1998. In 2000, he attended the DMA (Disciples and Missionaries Today) session in Jerusalem; in 2003, the

70+ session in Rome. He continued his pastoral activities, visiting people and maintenance of the buildings. Stany was appointed to the Lavigerie Missionary Center in Kigali in 2006, where he remained available for various services.

Back to Belgium

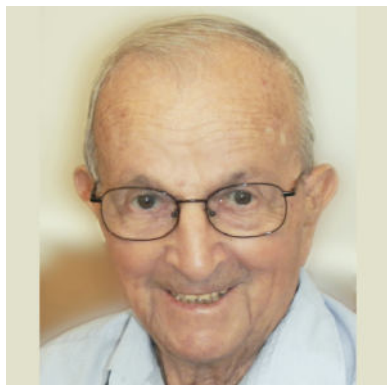
But age started to take its toll. Stany began to have problems with balance and became more and more forgetful. He went on leave in May 2015, but living there in the country weighed heavily on him. Given his health, he eventually joined our community in Evere. We all remember his escapades to the sea or elsewhere, in the company of his friend, Father Charles Bailly, who was the same age. Already bedridden for a few days, Stany passed away on November 12, at the age of 99, of which 67 in Rwanda.

The farewell Eucharistic celebration took place in the church of Notre-Dame des Grâces, in Chant d'Oiseau (Woluwe-Saint-Pierre), on November 20, followed by the burial in our cemetery of Varsenare.

Jef Vleugels



Roger Bisson 1927 - 2021



Born in:	Somersworth, USA 30/04/1927
Sp. Year:	St Martin, 12/08/1950
Oath:	Eastview, Canada, 18/06/1954
Priesthood:	Eastview, Canada, 29/01/1955
Died at:	St Petersburg, USA 27/09/2021

Roger Lucian Bisson was born on April 30, 1927 in Somersworth, NH, USA. He was the son of Adolphe and Lea Bisson. His was a large Catholic family, Roger being the seventh of ten children. His parents sent him to Catholic Schools: St Martin's Elementary in Somersworth and then to Assumption Prep, Worcester, Massachusetts, where he graduated in 1946. He continued for two years in Assumption College before transferring to the White Fathers' house of philosophy in Alexandria Bay, New York.

With the Missionaries of Africa, he made his novitiate in St. Martin, Montreal, Canada from

1950-1951. He received the habit on August 12, 1950. His theological formation was at Eastview, Ottawa, Canada from 1951-1955. Fr. Roger was ordained in Ottawa, Canada on January 29, 1955. His first priestly assignment was to Franklin, Pa then serving as the house of philosophy for the American Province. The house was set deep in the woods along the Allegheny River. In addition to his teaching duties Roger was charged with using the scenic setting to promote a National Shrine to Our Lady of Africa. There shone for the first time the young missionary's self-confidence and his ability to motivate and organize others in completing major pro-



jects. Friends of the “White Fathers,” many of them members of the local Knights of Columbus, helped build the shrine while Roger found ways to promote it attracting bus-loads of pilgrim-tourists to the rather remote setting. Once there, they received a full experience. Sunday pilgrimages included a mission talk, Mass, Stations of the cross along a quiet, wooded trail and a sit-down meal of hamburgers, scalloped potatoes, and apple pie. These delicious feasts were cooked and served by the ladies’ branch of Roger’s little army of volunteers. People were swept up in his enthusiasm and smiling exuberance.

The shrine became a popular venue for pilgrimages of the faithful to honor our Blessed Lady. Fr. Roger was the full-time director of the shrine from 1957-1961.

Leaving for Africa

Someone from the Catholic Relief Services must have heard of an African missionary with a bit of charisma, lots of organizing ability and great love for Africa. In 1961, his-hands on response to his missionary calling to the African continent was realized as he accepted to be the representative for Catholic Relief Services (CRS), as

program director for four African countries. The countries were Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) for 6 h years; Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) for a year and a half ; Dahomey (now Benin) for 10 years and Madagascar, for four and half years. Any assignments offered outside of Africa did not interest him. In the name of CRS, Fr. Roger oversaw many projects. He administered the construction of numerous water wells and water cisterns. For over 23 years, he organized a successful lunch program named Mother/Child/Health Program. He was also involved in the organization of emergency hunger/famine relief. Fr. Roger built dry storage grain silos. He then helped to start the production of an instant food formula (corn-soya blend) for children's nutrition.

For his efforts in operating successful relief and development programmes through these years with CRS, he received decorations from three governments and the Catholic Church. In 1968, he was made a Knight of the National Order of Merit of Upper Volta; in 1972, a Knight of the National Order of Merit of Dahomey; in 1979, Officer of the National Order of Merit of the People's Re-



public of Benin; and in 1984, Officer of the Papal Order Pro Deo et Ecclesia.

Return to the USA

In 1984, Fr. Roger left Madagascar and was assigned to the Missionaries of Africa Development Office in Washington, D.C. As director of planned giving, he worked at organizing the annuities programme for our generous donors.

In 2004, he came to the Missionaries of Africa retirement community in St. Petersburg, Florida. Few are the missionaries who embrace a quieter life of at least semi-retirement. Roger's attitude to retirement was to ignore it. He maintained a large correspondence with his benefactors and friends from many parts of the world. This was both an expression of his delight in people and his dedication to helping those in need. His desire to help could outstrip his means at times but he did not give up easily. He was available for ministry around the diocese especially helping at the cathedral parish in St Petersburg, a parish in Gulfport and Our Lady of Divine Providence House of Prayer in Clearwater.

While always active in ministry and assistance to those in need, Roger was no obsessive workaholic. His interests were far reaching. He loved woodworking. He fashioned plywood nativity scenes for front lawns both promoting the meaning of Christmas and raising funds for his personal charities. Never one to hide his lamps under a bushel, Father Bisson, when pleased with his finished product could be heard to exclaim: "Good job, Roger!" He enjoyed science, read the financial newspaper the Wall Street Journal, and deepened his study of the Bible often attending summer scripture study sessions in New Jersey. He could be stubborn at times with his confreres. On the other hand, he was always ready to do things together. He loved to travel, visit parks, try his luck at the casino, join in playing games in community.

He loved spending time with his very large collection of siblings, nephews, nieces, and many, many friends. Uncle Roger brought spark, fun, games, and laughter to these gatherings. When on home-leave from Africa there were euphoric celebrations where Roger shared slides of his projects and experiences. He was the fa-



mily celebrity. But these visits were mostly a party where he was simply Uncle Roger. At the requiem Mass, his proud niece eulogized him. She recalled Uncle Roger always approachable, delighting in the family treating everyone as his equal. She celebrated his achievements: saving and improving lives with CRS, motivating, supervising projects but not afraid to join in the work. “personally” planting trees and digging wells.

When old age, well behind schedule, finally diminished his health, vitality, and independence, it was hard for Father Bisson to accept. A world traveller, accustomed to his independence and often the one in charge of his projects, he sometimes bristled and even rebelled at his care-givers. When home care became impossible, he did not accept this easily. The last

months were spent at the Bon Secours Maria Manor. They were difficult months but in his final days in conversation with the sector superior he seemed finally to make his Nunc Dimittis. Roger entered eternal life peacefully on September 27, 2021, at the age of 94. He let go, secure in God’s mercy and Grace, bearing the offering of a long life of missionary service and solidarity.

A Funeral Mass was held on Tuesday, October 12, 2021, 9:30 AM at the Cathedral of St. Jude, the Apostle, 5815 5th Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL. Burial followed at Calvary Cemetery, 5233, 1 18th Avenue North, Clearwater.

Barthélémy Bazemo





Missionaries of Africa

Father Johann Pristl of the Diocese of Fulda, Germany, who died in Munich, Germany on the 13th of December 2021 at the age of 87 years, which 61 years of missionary life in Italy, Canada, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Germany.

Father Hans Ide of the Diocese of Trier, Germany, who died in Trier Germany on the 16th of December 2021 at the age of 80 years, which 39 years of missionary life in Uganda and Germany.

Father Huber Winfried of the Diocese of Limburg, Germany, who died in Munich, Germany on the 17th of December 2021 at the age of 83 years, which 56 years of missionary life in Tanzania and Germany.

Father Philippe De Vestele of the Diocese of Brugge, Belgium, who died in Varsenare, Belgium on the 31st of December 2021 at the age of 90 years, which 63 years of missionary life in Rwanda and Belgium.

Father Claude Galmiche of the Diocese of St-Etienne, France, who died in Tassy, France, on 07 January 2022 at the age of 96 years, of which 72 years were spent as a missionary in Zambia, Poland, and France.

Father Henri Neveu of the Diocese of Poitiers, France, who died in Billère, France, on the 15th of January 2022, at the age of 92 years, of which 66 years of missionary life in Burkina Faso and France.

Father Walter Seyfried of the Diocese of Berlin, Germany, who died in Trier, Germany, on the 16th of January 2022, at the age of 81 years, of which 52 years of missionary life in Mali, Congo R.D., Burkina Faso and Germany.

Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

Sister Magali Thomasset. She died in Marseille-Accates, France, on the 10th January 2022, at the age of 87 years, of which 63 years of missionary religious life in Algeria and France.

Sister Claire Desnoyers (Joseph Calazans). She died in Montreal, Canada, on the 10th January 2022 at the age of 103 years, of which 79 years of religious missionary life in Ghana, Burkina Faso, Mali, Italy and Canada.



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