





The General Chapter is at our doorstep. Wherever we are present, a great work of reflexion and projection for the future has been done; it has helped us to re-affirm our identity as members of a Society that builds the kingdom of Christ. Confident of who we are today, we are ready to direct our steps towards who we want to be in the future.

We are from the lineage of those who offered their lives for the Gospel to be proclaimed in the African world; in our footsteps there is already the imprint of all those who have been before us. Without interruption, in times of war and in times of peace, they have continued to advance so that the light of the Risen Lord may enlighten the world. Today we walk upon the sacred footprints, landmarks that have enabled us to get to where we are.

Now we also have the joy of making our own sacred footprints on the road so that future generations can also move forward uninterrupted into the future. Everything is renewed in the risen Christ and is expressed in the joyful singing of the Gloria and the Alleluia. Glory for the gifts received and Alleluia for the works accomplished!

## Fratelli Tutti n° 8

Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.

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**"Having heard the Word with a noble and generous heart they retain it and bear fruit by their constancy"**

(Luke 8, 15).



The parable of the sower in the synoptic gospels reminds us of the importance of welcoming the Word of God. The Word of God that has the power to multiply and bear fruit beyond our expectations. However, this parable reminds us that this is not obvious. Although there is the possibility that the seed will fall on good soil, it can also fall on the side of the road, on rocky ground or in thorns. It is therefore important to be careful how we receive the Word of God, how we cultivate our inner garden, so that this Word can germinate, grow and bear fruit. Thus, the image of Mary who, at the annunciation of the angel Gabriel, offered her "fiat" is certainly inspiring, all the more so since, after her "yes", Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth. Mary, in whom the "Word" became flesh, would go on to become the bearer of this seed, the bearer of the Word of God. Following the example of Mary, this call of bearing the seed, of bringing the Word of God to others, is at the root of our missionary vocation. We read in Chapter 1 of our Constitutions and Laws that our missionary vocation is to go and to proclaim the Gospel to the peoples of the African world and to be of service to them.

As I write these lines, we are only a few days away from the



**Martin Grenier,  
General Assistant**



beginning of our 29th Chapter on May 13. The opening of the Chapter will coincide with the canonization of Charles de Foucauld, scheduled for Sunday, May 15. Is this not an invitation from God for us to keep moving forward? At the end of this month we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the episcopal ordination of our confrere Joanny Thévenoud<sup>1</sup>, the first bishop in Burkina Faso, an event dear to the heart of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

Charles de Foucauld and Joanny Thévenoud both, in their respective environments, lived with ardor, the joy of bearing the seed, of spreading the Word of God. The fruits that followed are indeed many. The Sahara where Charles de Foucauld lived still remains a place where there is little Christian presence. But the witness of his life and of his faith never ceases to inspire us and encourages us to also live the Word in simplicity and poverty. As for Joanny Thévenoud, it is striking to see how the Church in Burkina Faso, where he worked, grew. It has become like a large tree. Today there are 76 confreres who originate from this Church.

It is this desire to bear the seed, to bear witness to the Word of God, that never ceases to characterize us. In this edition of the *Petit Echo*, we focus on the Province of Ghana-Nigeria which, at the beginning of the year 2022, has 57 confreres working there as well as 55 who are originally from there. The title of the book by our confrere Remigius F. McCoy says it so well: "Great Things Happen". Although we arrived in Nigeria later than we did in Ghana, that is in December 1943 with a group of a few confreres, including Owen McCoy and John Byrne, our confreres devoted themselves body and soul to the diocese of Oyo in Yoruba land.

In this edition of *Petit Echo*, we read about how our confreres are still committed to sowing the seed of the Word of God, among others, in our various parishes in Wa, Nakpanduri, Minna or in our formation houses in Ejisu and Ibadan. These are two places where candidates

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<sup>1</sup> Don't miss to watch this film of the diocese of Chambéry which presents our confrere Joanny Thévenoud, at the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkvcmIEfsDI>

from the two respective countries of the province are present, and which certainly help them to experience the richness of interculturality from the very beginning of their formation. One of our confreres also shares with us his experience with the Marist Brothers who welcomed him while he is studying in Accra.

Yes, bearing the Word is certainly dear to our hearts, but as one of the prayers dedicated to Our Lady of Africa reminds us, it is more important than ever to take root in the communities that welcome us, to be a seed ready to germinate. And I conclude by sharing this beautiful prayer with you:



*"Mary, Queen of Africa,  
you who are fully devoted to Jesus, the only source of salvation,  
help your missionary sons, to live from Christ,  
protected by the Father and united in the Spirit.*

*You, who at Cana, showed concern for others:  
help us to discern human misery  
and to come to the aid of the most destitute  
in the image of your Son who came to serve.*

*You who knew how to meditate divine wonders in your heart,  
help us to understand the Good News,  
to be its witnesses to every nation,  
as your Son has asked us to be.*

*You who, molded by the faith of your own people,  
became the Mother of that other people, which is the Church,  
help us to be rooted in the communities  
that welcome us and to be bearers of unity among people,  
in the communion of your Son, Our Lord Jesus. Amen!"*

Martin Grenier



## A crackling voice

Here comes a ‘crackling’ voice from St. Clement’s Formation House in Ibadan. Being an elderly confrere living in a youthful community is in itself a wonderful grace. To be able to help in shaping future members of the Society is an additional bonus. After being 40 years connected to Ghana, many thought a transfer to Nigeria as unrealistic, even going as far to say unfair. An often heard comment was: ‘You don’t transplant an old tree!’ Well the old tree is still very much alive and the transfer was not more drastic than a move within Ghana would have been. Here in Ibadan I am closer to Accra than in the north of Ghana. Only colonial borders make it look like far, but socio-culturally we are close enough. That is the way I look at it. To ‘sweeten the pill’, our formation house here is a nice reflection of the Ghana-Nigeria province, as our students are a mixture of both countries.

Like most other provinces, ours too has a pre-First Phase Forma-

tion House, a place where we welcome young men who have expressed the wish to join our Society. Limited by available space in our own house and at times short of places in the First Phase in Ejisu/Ghana, we normally manage to take in twelve candidates, six from each country, with one year a real peak of sixteen but also once an all-time low of six!

Ghana and Nigeria are nearly neighbours, only separated by two, east-west-wise, very tiny countries. Togo has a coast line of only 60 km and Benin one of 120 km. Ibadan, where we live, and Tamale, where the Provincial House is, are at an equal distance from Ghana’s capital, Accra, some 650 km! The flying time of just under 1 hour shows how close we are!

Still there are also some big differences. Nigeria is four times bigger than Ghana and its population more than six times that of Ghana, but our Society’s presence in Ghana has been longer and bigger than that in Nigeria. With well over 100 years in Ghana,

there were at its peak, well over 100 confreres working in the northern part. Nigeria saw the arrival of our first confreres only 80 years ago and there were never more than 30 missionaries at a given time in the south western State of Oyo! And while in Ghana most of our aspirants come from the areas where we have been, in Nigeria it is quite the opposite with plenty applications from all over Nigeria with up till now not even one confrere from Oyo (now Oyo and Osogbo) diocese!

### ***Our community***

So, at our house we have a quite a mixture of aspirants coming

from various backgrounds. Despite all the differences they are being asked to live in unity and harmony! As a staff, coming presently from southern Africa, Ethiopia and Europe, we try to give that example by a simple life style, co-operating at all levels and asking our students to do the same. We share our lives with them on all levels, in that way showing them that we are all responsible for the one another and for the total running of the house!

It is wonderful to see how the initial attitudes in September of 'wait and see', have by Christmas grown into a real missionary spirit of co-operation and co-responsi-



Piet de Bekker with our students



bility. Besides being the local bur-sar, I have the weekly privilege to share with them the history of our Society, the story of our Founder Lavigerie and any other questions which may come up! I am old enough to have many stories to tell and experiences to share! My main aim is to instill in them a spirit of total generosity (*visum pro martyrio*) and unfailing co-operation (oath of obedience) with the ‘project’ of our Society! I insist that such an attitude is a ‘*conditio sine qua non*’ to live a happy Missionary of Africa life! If not ready, my advice to them is to leave!

Such a life style finds its ‘lived’

experience in all the activities of the house. Academic achievements are put in the background, with rather stress on practical subjects such as improving on oral and written English, learning French, preparing liturgies and practice singing, cleaning the house and helping in the kitchen, maintaining the grounds and the garden, also looking after the poultry and the dogs and not in the least taking part in sports!

All these aspects are very part and parcel of a true missionary training! In that line there is also the weekly pastoral activity at ‘Ile Lafia’, a centre for the homeless



Piet de Bekker with some young people of the parish

run by the Passionist Sisters in the centre of Ibadan. On Sundays the students are part of the parish community, to which I myself am also an associate, helping out in the various Mass centres. All in all, we make up a very lively group of happy people, giving that witnessing aspect to all around. May the Good Lord bless our aspirants on their way to full maturity!

As an activity outside the community, I am able to help out as a Spiritual Director for about 30 Seminarians at the Major Seminary SS. Peter & Paul, 3 km away here in Ibadan, where in the past confreres have been for many years a well appreciated part of the staff. The total number of seminarians there is close to 400! Every month some of us also assist during their monthly recollections by being available for the sacrament of reconciliation.

This year it will be twenty years that the then 'Delegation' Nigeria merged with the Ghana province to become the Ghana-Nigeria Province. At the time, with only 5

confreres present and only 4 Nigerian members, there were strong suggestions for the Society to leave Nigeria. Fortunately, the optimistic outlook prevailed, and of which we are now plucking the fruits. With more than 15 confreres in Nigeria, it proves to be still a fully alive 'mission' territory, and with nearly 20 Nigerian members it has also proved to be a rich source for vocations. To God be praise !



Piet de Bekker



## My experience with the Marist Brothers (fms)

When I was doing pastoral ministry at St. Benedict Parish in Wa, the Province asked me to study accounting at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) in Accra. On September 23rd, 2020, I left Wa for Accra to begin the registration process with the Accreditation Board while also looking for accommodation. This I managed to do, and found residence with the Marist Brothers. So, for the past year, I have been staying with them at their Provincial House in Abelenpke, Accra. Before going there, I stayed for two months at the Catholic Guest House called "Good Shepherd Home" in Racecourse, Accra. The setting was adequate; however, it was not a conducive place for learning. As a result, I had to go around, particularly to religious communities and Roman Catholic presbyteries, to find where I might be welcomed. Looking for somewhere to stay, I discovered the Provincial House of the Marist Brothers through the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

(FMM) in Abelenpke, Accra. Later, I had to meet with them to discuss the possibility of staying with them for the four years I will be at school (GIMPA).

I went to meet with the members of the Marist Provincial house community two days after the first encounter and explained why we were meeting. Surprisingly, after explaining everything to them, they also offered me their terms of service, which we all agreed on, and the community leader and the Provincial both agreed unanimously that I stay with them for the duration of my studies. Since February, 2021, I have been living in the Provincial house of the Marist Brothers. The seven (7) members of the community are, Bro. Cyprian Gandebo (Provincial), Bro. Augustine Naatey (Community Superior and Provincial Secretary), Bro. Simon Kanjam (Provincial Treasurer), Bro. Valentine Meyanui, Bro. Cho Nchang, Bro. Francis Veye, and Fr. John C. Mubanga (M.Afr.).



The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) in Accra

This write up is fully inspired by my present community life experience with the Marist Brothers. I share my experience of the Marist Brothers Community in the following points: Missionaries of Africa (M.Afr.) and Marist Brothers Community living, spiritual life in the community, meals in the community, outings and celebrations in the community, impact of Covid-19 pandemic in our community life, student life in the community and conclusion.

### ***Community life experience***

Being a missionary with Missionaries of Africa united in diversity, I learned how to live in an international community of three or more confreres from various backgrounds and cultures. As a

family, we demonstrate to men and women that we are all children of the same loving Father (God), members of one family (M.Afr) without distinction. And we see this in a team spirit, in prayer, common pastoral projects, washing up, meals, in our simplicity, and brotherly life. I have also learned and experienced that when we live together, we are supposed to avoid envy, slander, and hatred. Rather we should encourage one another because, as the saying goes, "together we stand, divided we fall." We live to help and support one another and to collaborate with those among us who are responsible for the proper operation of our purpose. Confreres may be visitors by definition when they visit our communities, but in reality, they



John C. Mubanga with the Marist Brothers

are not because it is their home and they should feel comfortable to live or stay freely there.

Actually, I have observed that a Marist community life is one of companionship, simplicity, hospitality and a Gospel-based life. They have the same qualities as I mentioned of the Missionaries of Africa. So, as I stay with them, I have discovered that, despite their own spirituality and different way of life, community living is important to them too. So being one of them is not a big deal or a problem for me. I have simply adapted and made their community my community as well. I have integrated myself into the community's life and I feel welcomed.

## ***Spiritual Life in the Community***

After spending some time with the Marist Brothers, I have grown to admire their way of life, particularly their prayer life. When I first arrived in the community, the first thing they did was to show me the chapel and give me the community timetable, which included prayer times and meals. In terms of prayer life, the community has daily Masses, adoration every Thursday, and the prayers of the Church. We have Masses in the community on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. The rest of the days, we join the Blessed Sacrament Parish, which is a few minutes' walk away.



At the Parish, I say one Mass on Sundays and occasionally during the week at the Blessed Sacrament Parish. In addition, every Saturday after finishing Mass in our community, I go to the Provincial house of the FMM Sisters for another Mass and occasionally during the week. During our communal prayer periods, we always begin by greeting our Mother Mary (Marian Prayers) and close with a Marian song. Mary plays a crucial role in the lives of the Marist Brothers. In fact, they, like us, are under the patronage of our Mother Mary, but they are more Marian by virtue of their name. Actually, I was and continue to be moved by the way they pray, particularly their desire to pray for their brothers in other places. Every day, there is Mass intention to pray for the Church in general and for their brothers in various communities within the Institute.

They always pray for their brothers who celebrate their birthday and profession anniversaries. All of this is done gladly and in a loving spirit. This kind of concern for a brother is really encouraging to me, and I do participate in all of this by praying with them and for the "White Fathers." We have daily morning prayers at 6:30am pro-

ceeded by meditation. The evening prayers begin at 6:00pm and ends at 6:40pm every day of the week.

### ***Meals in the Community***

Eating as a community is crucial for the Marist Brothers, as it is for us Missionaries of Africa. I have noticed in the community that if one of the members is present in the house but taking the time to come to the meals, we will literally wait a little bit, and if not, someone will give him a call to ensure that everything is fine with that Brother. The community is always informed if a Brother is to be absent at meals time. There is a great care and love for one another and they ensure that every Brother is well fed and healthy. Meals are a happy time for them. We share a lot of stories, laughter, achievements, and even disappointments are shared when we sit down to eat. This makes the dining area a happy place at every meal. Breakfast is served immediately after the morning prayers, while lunch and supper are served at 12:30pm, and 6:40pm respectively.

### ***Outings and Celebrations in the Community***

We do go out for meals as a community on occasions, or when



a new member is welcomed into the community. Apart from going out to eat, we also have Marist Brothers' events in which I participate. We commemorate their foundation day, birthdays, and Religious Profession anniversaries. I was also given the opportunity to participate in one of the professions in Kumasi, where 20 of the new Brothers professed in the Institute. Having these festivals together is a time when the brotherhood and life are shared in common. Work and relaxation are both essential and are part and parcel of our community.

## ***Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Our Community Life***

The rapid and successive spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in such a short period of time has resulted in a massive and unprecedented difficult phase in human history. This virus has gone viral and is steadily spreading to other parts of the country. As a result, we are always coming up with new ideas and suggestions that, when implemented, will have a significant impact on our society and our "common home," the universe. The advent of coronavirus-associated diseases (SARS and MERS) has cre-



John C. Mubanga celebrating his birthday in the community

ated global issues for religious communities, and a variety of other sectors. In our community, for example, five of us and one of the workers acquired the virus and were self-quarantined in our various rooms.

Because several of us had COVID-19, it had an impact on our community life, particularly on our communal prayers. We could not pray together in the chapel any more. Personal prayers were the only ones encouraged. I was having Masses in my room, and everyone was watching Masses on TV and radio. When it came to meals, the Provincial himself, Bro. Cyprian Gandebo, and Bro. Valentine Meyanui, the sole survivors, took up the task of caring for us who were sick by making and bringing meals to us every day, encouraging us, and praying for us. We ceased

eating together since the incident, we stopped attending Parish Masses, and we also missed the Parish's Christmas and New Year's celebrations for the year 2021 and 2022 respectively. Other effects were a reduction in the number of visitors who came to see us, no more laughing in the community, and exhaustion among the members. However, after we were healed, life in the community resumed.

### ***Student Life in the Community***

As a student, I have an extremely demanding schedule at school. I need extra time to study and master the many calculations, or else I might wind up with an egg at the end of the year. I attend classes at school from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and some days I am in school until 8:00 p.m. Saturdays are included. Despite my hectic



Ready to go on a picnic



schedule, I make time to participate in the life of the community. I believe that, while our charisms differ, we are similar in our prayers and community life. Participating in the community, is the moment to relax and take a vacation from the books. Otherwise, due to the strain at school, I sometimes feel really fatigued. Nevertheless, I also manage the situation. Thank you to the Brothers' of the Provincial House for their encouragement and support, as well as the Missionaries of Africa confreres who, from time to time, stopped by to say hello. That was also really encouraging.

### **Conclusion:**

We will continue to respond to Jesus' charge to go and preach the good news to all people in obedience to the Spirit, via PRAYER, continual formation, and love for one another and Africa. This begins with having a witnessing community where love, recreation, birthday celebrations, praying, and sharing meals are at the heart. The community of the Marist Brothers Provincial House, where I am currently residing, is a good example of such a community. I am really grateful to the Marist Brothers for agreeing to host me and for considering me as one of them.



John C. Mubanga

## Discovering daily life in Wa community, Lavigerie House

### ***The place, the community, and the house where I live***

I am grateful and feel privileged to share with you some elements of our life as Missionaries of Africa living in Lavigerie House, Wa Community. Our house is located at the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) Residential area, Wa municipality. It is an urban place. Wa is the capital city of the Upper West Region in the North of Ghana. In terms of weather, the temperatures are generally high, mostly in February and March, because of the location in the southern part of Sahel. May-October is the rainy season followed by a cool dry period known as Harmattan, a dusty north wind blowing from the Sahara.

The Community where I live in is made up of 7 people from 6 different nationalities: 5 Priests Missionaries of Africa and 2 stagiaires and we live in a modest house of 10 bed rooms and other rooms, following the spirit of

simple style life style. We live in a community and we try to live the community project. In the house, we look after the garden so that we can get fresh vegetables for ourselves. We live among and minister to Dagabas who constitute the majority of the Christian population. But history tells us that, the Upper West regional capital (Wa) was once dominated by Muslims, the Wala people. But currently, we observe that the number of Christians has increased and keeps on increasing greatly. People are coming from the surrounding villages and from other parts of the country to settle in Wa town for various reasons. These new settlements have positive impact on the development of the place. We observe a fast growing of new churches of other denominations which in some ways are attracting a good number of people. In general, the people are welcoming and they have happy memories of missionaries who have impacted them in one way or the other. They



John Abobo, Félix Kamunenge, Gaspard Cirimwami, Peter Nyirenda, Stag. Josaphat Kambale, Maralf Jiménez, and Stag. Robert Lukyamuzi.

like their culture and are attached to it.

Despite of being an urban place, Wa remains in some ways an agricultural community. The majority of the population make their living by small scale farming. People make use of the land that is available during the rainy season to farm corn, millet, yams, some vegetables and groundnuts. The Shea nuts are collected, most of the time by women from wild trees for food and refinement of oils for cosmetics. Among the population, we have teachers, health workers, traders and civil workers and those in private sector.

### ***Our Apostolate on the spot:***

As missionaries of Africa, we minister to people in St. Benedict's Parish which is still growing and evangelizing at all levels such as

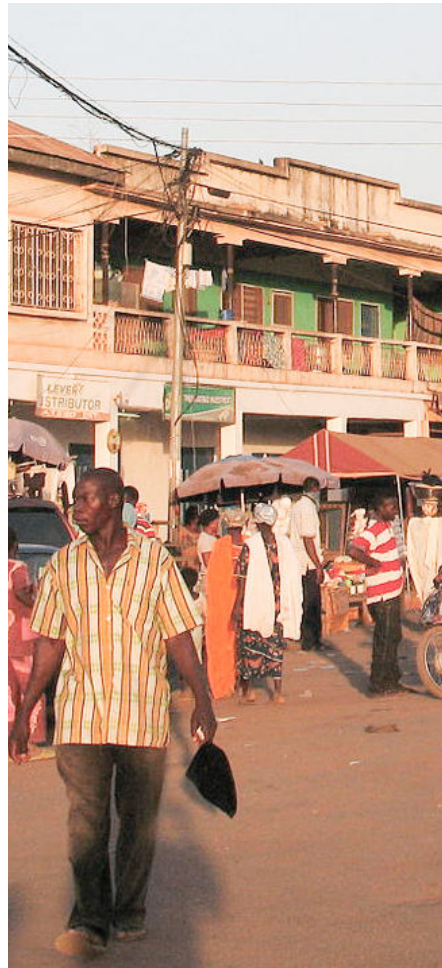
primary and urban catechesis of children, youth and adults. The Parish's evangelization effort extends to about twenty-five villages. The furthest is at about 45 Km away from the main parish centre. Masses and pastoral activities are carried out in some of these villages: 4 outstations have been established so far. Apart from the 4 outstations, in the spirit to foster the domestic church, the Parish realized the need of forming Small Christian Communities. The hope is that the formation of these Small Christian Communities helps to form the Domestic Church, to deepen the relationship with God and among the people themselves. Following this spirit, Masses and catechetical work are performed in the Small Christian Communities on a weekly basis, in primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary Institution.

Wa town and its environs, in fact the Upper West Region in general, is a fertile land for Encounter and Dialogue- Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Efforts are being made by confreres in the Community in animating and creating awareness on some issues that affect negatively the lives of the people such as Human Trafficking, Domestic Violence, Street children, degradation of the environment with emphasis on Laudato Si... For the past three years, parishioners are always encouraged by the Justice and Peace Commission of the Parish to embark on a tree planting exercise. The same is done in some secondary schools and tertiary Institutions to create awareness on the issues of Human Trafficking, Domestic violence, Street children, environmental consciousness... Personally, being a member of JPIC Commission in Ghana, I always take advantage of the celebration of the Eucharist to discuss one or the other issue when it is possible. I find that during Holy Mass it is a good opportunity to reach out to many.

### **My main challenges**

The main challenge I am facing at the present moment is the language of the people to whom I am

sent. I have just moved to a new environment and when I go to the villages, I feel limited. Besides that, there are challenges of unemployment among youth, vulnerable youth on the streets (Kayaye phenomenon in Ghana), the 'mushroom churches', coupled now with



The main street of Wa



Palm Sunday procession in St. Benedict's Parish

the current pandemic of coronavirus and many other problems. In 2018, I participated in a case study survey on the 'Kayayei phenomenon' in Ghana and I was very challenged by the findings. Since then, I have been asking myself what could be the contribution of the Society of Missionaries of Africa working in Ghana in combatting that scourge that affects the lives of many and also the society as a whole. These words of Jesus, "... Give them some food yourselves" keep on resounding in my mind. (Mt, 14:16) and St James questions us: "If a brother or a sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm and eat well", but you

do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? (James 2: 16)

With time I have come to understand that challenges are not threats to my ministry as a priest, but rather opportunities. They give room to think as a community and as individual what approach to take in the future.

## ***My joys and my hopes***

Being part of a community that strives to proclaim and celebrate God's love through different activities. Despite all the challenges there is joy of living among people who are journeying together and trying to help each other in various ways.

My hope is to be open and apostolic in a changing world by being active in life changing education holding on to the gospel values. And the reason for me to hope is that, the Spirit is at work.

***Change that I would like to see about the life of the people hosting me***

First of all, I always ask myself if one can change other people. I prefer to talk about the influence my attitude can have on lives of people. Living an exemplary life that will question other people.

In the context of the people hosting me, I would like to see people being more conscious of the environmental crisis. From bush fires to protecting the trees, from throwing away plastic to collecting them for a better waste management. Also, to see that the number of youths in the street (Kayaye) has reduced.

Living in Wa Community/Lavigerie House, I continue discovering the richness of community life and its impact on apostolate. Living with other people from different cultures, is a blessing. We enrich each in various ways. The Apostolate is a way of expressing God's love and our daily activities depend on that. The peoples to whom we minister are a blessing to us.



Gaspard Cirimwami

## Nakpanduri, my first “love”

On September the 18, 2020, Yosef Giday and I passed a first night in our comfort Zone of Nakpanduri. I was the elder confrere already, for my first appointment was to Bunkpurugu<sup>1</sup>, a year earlier. It was still raining and the whole place was green, though our smiles were hidden by face masks.

That night, we put chairs in the compound to contemplate the stars and implore saint Simon Peter for our new venture. We were offered some roasted groundnuts, a bit of *damun* (local beer) and some local food. It was a humble, but beautiful welcome by local Church council members. We called it a first night!

Nakpanduri is a beautiful little town at the crossroad of the Eastern corridor, with a beautiful escarpment. It offers a gorgeous view of Garu and Bawku. In the middle of the scarp, you find a seasonal

waterfall on top of which is situated the famous Kwameh Nk’rumah Guest House. As one enters the town, a beautiful song by women on the roundabout is chanted... *Sina be, sina be*<sup>2</sup>! If you are curious like I am, you end up bargaining for roasted ground nuts. It is well prepared and so delicious. Of



The Nakpanduri crossroads

<sup>1</sup> Our Lady of Hope Parish of Bunkpurugu is our mother Church, situated in the same linguistic zone. That is where we were posted before moving to our then, new community in the Ghana-Nigeria Province.

<sup>2</sup> *There is groundnut*, in *Moor* or *bimoba*, the language of the majority.

course, it is presented with beautiful smiles.

The town does not sleep: If not merchants still selling their goods, men are chatting around a tot or two of akpetashi<sup>3</sup>; loud songs like Holy Ghost fire or Crazy for Jesus are common tunes throughout the night for prayer and entertainment in the prayer camps, funeral houses or in the new Churches around; the muezzin sings for Muslims; and finally birds do their duty in order to chase away the darkness.



Venant Bukuru tasting some damun

<sup>3</sup> Local liquor, mainly used for funeral or official ceremonies.

The town does not have a siesta: the large majority is involved in farming activities, even those in offices still find time for farming; pupils and students are on their way to school by 6:00 a.m; women carry firewood for family businesses and the local brew; tricycles busy sending traders to markets; Fulani graze their cows...and the day is gone.

### Pastoral activities

Day and night, a lot is done in our new kingdom: Daily morning Masses, visiting the sick and elderly, planting trees and watering them, learning the language, administering Sacraments (...) like in any other Parish set up. We have ten outstations. Out of these, some are hardly accessible during the rainy season, others are affected by conflicts: special attention and support are needed. However, performing funerals is the most laudable activity. I am still learning a lot here.

The most painful to me is when you call a confrere, tears in your eyes, informing him that another child has passed away. Indeed, in the Mɔɔb culture the death of a young one is so horrible. It sounds like a curse, and therefore, he or she should be buried as soon as



From left to right: Yosef Giday, Amani Jean-Claude Lulenga;  
Stagiaire Charles Byiringiro; and Bukúru Venant;  
Behind: Prosper Harelimana (visitor from Ejisu Formation Centre)

possible, even if he or she is from a Christian family. It applies to any unmarried man or woman. I really questioned my own faith and understanding of human life.

Another bitter pill to swallow is when a pastor preaches about the devil and points at a poor old woman to be the sorceress. She is taken to the shrine whereby, if the gods prove her to be a witch, she starts accusing others! Some of our faithful are taken there. For this, training of Catechists and Prayer Leaders is a dire need.

Another challenge is with the youth and unemployment. From the discussion with some, the root cause might be found in our today's educational system. Someone who

passed 12 years assimilating history of Australia, Geography and language of England, French Revolution, etc. will hardly come back to farming. So, is the Gospel of prosperity enough to permit him/her get the dream job? Will catechism be enough to cover up the gap? The courageous ones end up in gold-mining activities in the southern part of Ghana (the famous GALAMSEY). There are countless abuses, but better choices are limited.

The idea of vocational schools is another laudable way of keeping the youth busy. These can help tackling the abuse of girls and young men, keep them busy with something tangible and promising for the future. The youth are the



Venant Bukúru, and Yosef Giday  
planting fruit trees in the new mission

heart of any country, but if their strength is not well channeled, we may end up having armed robbers (which is not so alarming here) or terrorism, ... It is about justice and peace.

### **And today?**

Plenty needs to be done, like in any foundation. However, the joy of living with others outnumbers the pain. For instance, Interreligious dialogue or Ecumenism is our daily bread. There can be some points

on which we differ, but we visit one another, we receive mutton at Eid El Fitr, some milk from friends, or some soft drinks at the farewell of a pastor, etc. As the tradition unites us all, funerals or installment of a chief are a must. Beyond all, there is strength in confreres.

Tired in the evening, sweating like hell, you hear the whispering of a confrere: 'Bro, there is a chilled one for you. Tomorrow will be another day to enjoy!' Welcome to Nakpanduri!



Venant Bukuru

## Nigeria's Minna Project, the society Dream come through

Minna Project is an outcome of the reflections and consultations of many confreres who dreamt of a multipurpose project in the central part of Nigeria. The purpose of the facility is to take care of the needs of our society eventually and minister to the youths and less privileged in collaboration with St. Luke's Parish-Gyedna (run by M.Afr). This dream is slowly taking shape.

The Lavigerie Residence community is in Minna Diocese, Nige-

ria. The community has four primary apostolates: Parish apostolate, Vocation Promotion, Youth Skill Centre and Residence to accommodate Confreres who come to Abuja for their paper work, personal retreat or to rest. We are four confreres and one Stagiaire making five in number. The Parish team is made up of the Parish Priest Fr. Dago do Rosário Estima, his Assistance Fr. Norbert Issa who is also the Parish Coordinator of Justice and Peace and the Stagiaire Thacien Manizabayo; the Vocation



Dago with the youth of the parish at St. Kizito, Boyi Madaki Outstation

Team is made up of the Vocation Director Fr. Otto Katto while the Vocational Skills School is coordinated by the Project Coordinator Fr. Virgilius Kawama. However, we all work together as a team in all areas of our different apostolates.

### ***The parish of Saint-Luke***

St. Luke Parish is in Gyedna village in Tafa Local Government Area in Niger State. It is situated 7km from Abuja FCT, estimated about 15minutes drive from Bwari, the last town of Abuja city. The Parish, was officially established in November 2018, is located approximately 300 metres away from the Residence. It fulfills the Missionaries of Africa's charism,

such as Encounter and Inter-Religious Dialogue and Encounter (Islam and ATR), Justice and Peace, Primary Evangelization and Ecumenism. The Parish has six outstations, and the total population is above 300 Christians, of which the most predominant are the native Gbagyi, people who are subsistence farmers.

The main liturgical language is Hausa. Learning the Hausa language is a must for all confreres appointed to this area before engaging fully in the apostolate. However, the Gbagyi language is the most spoken among the natives, and I firmly believe that people feel much at ease when communicating with them in their local dialect. This calls for con-





freres readiness in trying to learn both languages (Hausa and Gbagyi) since the elderly people communicate only in Gbagyi.

The Parish type of apostolate is typically Primary evangelization since it is an upcoming community (Fledgling Parish). However, we also involve ourselves in Encounter and Dialogue with the neighbouring Muslim community, ecumenism through CAN (Christian Association of Nigeria). And the formation of the laity in different aspects of the church becomes our primary apostolate to strengthen the lay faithful.

Lavigerie residence has been functioning since April 2021. Nevertheless, our Lord Bishop Most Rev. Dr. Martin Igwemezie Uzoukwu of Minna officially inaugurated and blessed it, in the presence our Assistant General Superior Fr. Martin Grenier and our Ghana-Nigeria Provincial Fr. John Aserbire on 7th November 2021. And since then, it has been receiving many Confreres, our Brother Diocesan Priests and lay people who come around to rest, visit and do paper work at Abuja FCT (Federal Capital Territory). The House also welcomes aspirants for their COME & SEE programs.



Starting St Luke's parish, 2020

The community members are lovely and welcoming, and we try as much as possible to make this a home to us, where brothers are united through prayers, community living and common goals in their various apostolates, however as confreres when one goes astray we approach one another with fraternal correction, this helps us to grow as one family.

There is a good relationship between the Missionaries and the local clergy, we have our usual monthly recollections where we pray together, take the opportunity to meet our spiritual companions, having the sacrament of reconciliation and share our joys of the gospel, even though we have our own community monthly recollection as the community program indicates.

### **Challenges in our Mission**

We have so many good reasons to thank the Lord for our presence here, looking at the positive impact we bring to the area and especially to the youth, nevertheless, we also encounter a few challenges especially concerning the language learning. We noticed a lack of an official language school with qualified teachers to help the newly arrived Missionaries in learning the languages and the culture of the Gbagyi people in the Diocese of Minna as well as the economic and situational politics of Nigeria as a whole. With the forthcoming acquisition skill centre, we hope there will be a place for culture and language of Gbagyi and Hausa learning which will be helpful to the newly appointed Missionaries before they

begin their Missionary journey.

Gyedna community both catholic and non-Catholic have been very generous to us, they try as much as possible to share with us in little way they can from their farming produce since that is where they get their income from. In spite of the little support they render to us it still becomes difficult for the Lavigerie House to run on its own and not depend itself on the Society.



Dago do Rosario Estima

## Missionary identity is at the heart of a fulfilling missionary life. Ibadan Nigeria



Prayer time at the St. Clement's formation house

I wonder how many questions are asked relating to identity every day. What is your name, who are you where do you come from, what do you do in life, national identity, passports etc. These questions people ask to establish and differentiate working and living relationships in life. Once an identity is established, a certain degree of trust is generated and letter on, bonding and loving relationships can start to develop.

Our mission identity is not dif-

ferent as it reveals our true self, our focus and purpose. Our mission as missionaries of Africa has involved through many years, but one must ask, where and who began it and why, where are we now and where are we going from here.???

It is in this context in which I was sent to Nigeria, Ibadan formation House to live as a missionary. When I arrived I was asked to be part of the formation team as a leader since 2017, after eight

months of trying to learn the language and culture of the Yoruba people. At the same time I was elected to be the provincial delegate of Nigerian sector up to date.

### ***Joys of being in formation.***

My joy of being a formator stems from the call to serve and accompany young men to discern their calling to participate in the mission of Christ within the society of the missionaries of Africa's Charism. Taking part in all activities of the formation house makes me experience fulfilment as I discover God's hand in forming the young men as they slowly start responding to formational demands with joy and freedom. To see them grow in faith and getting attached to the white father's way of life, working and living out their Charism. Prayer is at the centre of every activity, thus personal and community prayer is the main focus that brings out the beauty of living together. A bond between the confreres, teachers and support staff members is what makes life fulfilled. Being in the formation house gives me a lot of opportunities to remain focus and committed to prayer, community life and live my missionary vocation a bit better.

Another joy that I have experienced is that: as formators with help from our benefactors (Rome and friends of missionaries of Africa France), we have managed to put up a new story building with five self contained rooms in the house. This is because we did not have proper accommodation for visitors. This house has two large rooms downstairs to accommodate two elderly confreres as a sick bay.

### ***Challenges***

Formation ministry is not easy. Living and working like a student for six years is not easy. Moving around the compound and having to start anew, every year with new students, it demands commitment, dedication and sacrifice which is not that easy at times. The biggest challenge is when it comes to dismissing a student, especially if



The St. Clement's formation house



Working time at the St. Clement's formation house

that individual does not see the reasons as to why he is asked to go. This takes a lot of patience, focus, humanity and courage. Evaluations are not easy at all. Another challenge is the fact that Nigeria and Ghana have so much potential for missionary vocations and we can only admit 12 aspirants in St. Clement and only 40 students in Ejisu Philosophy centre.

### ***Joys of being in administration as provincial delegate.***

As a provincial delegate, my greatest fulfilment is when I see confreres dedicate themselves fully to the mission or to the task they are meant to do with zeal and commitment especially in the difficult circumstances. Empowering and delegating young confreres to do

their best as missionaries. For example, One day Fr. Dago in Gyedina from Minna showed me a way to one outstation for mass at Christmas and he was in front leading the way on a motor bike while I was in the car. The road was too dusty, very bad and it was very early morning, but what struck me were his big smile and a happy welcome at the outstation when we arrived. It made me reflect and come to the reality of service and joy of a young missionary just been ordained with that spirit of deep faith and selfless.

This is what I can call casting the net into the deep waters (Luke 5:1-11) Jesus is inviting us to lower our nets and all our entire lives in a tireless and committed way so as to draw many others to the Gospel. This mandate is given to us so that we must evangelize with utmost enthusiasm and zeal, searching far and wide for God's lost sheep. This surely brings meaning to us as missionaries of Africa.

Leadership is also a humbling and privilege time to accompany and walk with each confrere, and see how they involve themselves with generosity, trust and collaboration. I learned to be patient, kind and tolerant.

### **Challenges as provincial delegate.**

The greatest challenge as a delegate was when I was misunderstood and wrongly judged by my own confreres. There is a sense of loss, confusion, and being drained of energy when the confrere you have loved, supported disappoints you repeatedly and does not show any sign of remorse and gratitude.

Another challenge is that it is not very easy to deal with all the bishops and their secretaries. You need great humility, flexibility, sense of humour, patience and simplicity. The provincial team also and the bureaucracy we have in our society needs the Holy Spirit for wisdom. The many requests for financial aid can be overwhelming.

Above all are the insecurities in this country at all times poses a great threat to our missionary presence.

Finally joys and sorrows give as an opportunity to share in the perfect sacrifice of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.



Emmanuel Chishala Mambwe



# The joy of serving as a formator and lecturer at Ejisu-Ghana

Serving in a formation house is a fascinating experience. The fascinating aspect of it lies in the fact that there is no definite formula for carrying out the exercise. As formators, we basically rely on impressions, echoes from candidates themselves, human-made guidelines [vade mecum], skills acquired from our training and experience, and on “Divine whispers,” if we are truly open and attentive to the Holy Spirit. “Formation is a work of art, and not a police action” (Pope Francis 2014). We deal with human beings endowed by the Creator with a free-will and a tremendous capacity for growth. Fundamentally, this is what brands the work of a formator as a fascinating experience, an experience that can be well described as a “joyful-challenge.”

Since the beginning of 2021, I am serving as a formator and lecturer at St. Martin of Tours, Missionaries of Africa Formation House, Ejisu-Ghana. Our house is located about 18 km from Ghana’s second largest city, Kumasi. Ejisu

is gradually becoming a major town due to a vast majority of people from Ghana now settling and making it their home. The area is mainly inhabited by the Ashanti people. Twi is the language commonly spoken here. People are generally proud of their language and culture. It gladdens their hearts when foreigners like me attempt to speak their language. Social hierarchy is very much accentuated. Traditional chiefs are tremendously revered. Women are visibly powerful in all aspects of life. No need to struggle for their rights. Business is the main activity, though there is a bit of farming in the surrounding areas. The majority of Ejisu dwellers are either engaged in business or serving in government offices.

Our community, this academic year 2021-2022, is comprised of 4 formators and 36 candidates. Candidates hail from Ghana and Nigeria. The formators are Christopher Chileshe from Zambia, Prosper Harelimana from Rwanda, Jacek Wróblewski from Poland,

and myself from Uganda. We are doing our best to make our community a home for everyone. Interculturality largely contributes to our strength and joy. Prosper and I are particularly involved in the intellectual formation of our candidates. We assiduously handle philosophy classes at Spiritan University College situated about 200m from our community. The University is owned and run by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, the Spiritans.

### **Why philosophy?**

I find joy in sharing my little knowledge and engaging in philosophical debates with students. Some confreres may be asking

themselves: What is the relevance of studying philosophy today? Do we really need three or four years of philosophical studies? How useful is philosophy for missionary work? Are studies in Bible or theology or missiology not more relevant for missionary work than philosophy? Many people see philosophy as vastly speculative and somehow disconnected from concrete life. Some even see philosophy as a stepping stone towards atheism or agnosticism (religious indifference). When I shared with a confrere that I was majoring in philosophy, he suddenly exclaimed: “I hope you will not lose your faith!” On the contrary, the study of philosophy has largely



Main entrance to the Spiritan University College



strengthened my faith in the God of love and compassion, the One revealed in Jesus Christ. I gladly endorse the Medieval dictum “philosophy is the handmaid of theology” (*philosophia achilla theologiae*). The more I venture into philosophical quandaries, the more I find myself before an “abyss” that I cannot fathom. This “abyss” is no doubt the Creator, our loving God who discretely lures us to Himself so that we may have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10).

How does the study of philosophy benefit our candidates? Phil-

osophy enables our candidates to think critically, evaluate themselves, and judiciously analyze their cultural-social milieu in view of making a good discernment. Philosophy enables them to appreciate themselves, discover their talents and bring them out for the benefit of humankind. We are indeed blessed with talented young men in Ejisu. Most of them are talented in spiritual animation, human relationships, music, sports, art, design, writing, culinary, etc. These gifts generate good vibes in our community. The future is bright. Experience has shown that such gifts or talents come out when we, as formators, create an environment that allows them to freely express themselves and bring out the best of themselves.

Studying philosophy seems to be more vital today than, perhaps, decades ago. We live in a world that is volatile. Modern capitalism, which largely characterizes most of our societies, persuasively defines a successful life in terms of material prosperity. Philosophy aims at empowering our candidates to realize that while wealth improves our conditions of living, it is not the determining factor for a successful life. How many people are enormously wealthy and yet



The Saint Martin de Tours  
Formation House



Recreation time at Saint Martin de Tours  
Formation House

are leading miserable lives? What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his life? (Mark 8:36).

“An unexamined life is not worth living” (Plato’s *Apology* 38a5-6). Experience has shown that in those human societies where individuals have no capacity to examine their lives, people tend to adhere to certain cultural practices that are intrinsically odd, but which that particular society considers [at that moment] suitably true. How many people in this world [especially in Africa] are still intellectually and psychologically enslaved by witchcraft and

other sorts of superstitious beliefs? How many people still believe in self-proclaimed prophets, pastors, diviners, etc., who unfortunately take advantage of people’s ignorance to enrich themselves materially? This is precisely why the study of philosophy seems paramount in empowering our candidates [future missionaries] to avoid swallowing commonly accepted cultural or religious assumptions without continuously submitting them to the sieve of critical thinking to gauge whether they are appropriate or not, true or false.



Graduation ceremony  
at Spiritan University



## ***Some challenges***

Serving as a formator and lecturer is not without challenges. The major challenge is to strike a balance between the different pillars of our formation programme, namely, human formation, spiritual formation, intellectual formation, community living and apostolic formation. All these pillars are equally important. It is therefore difficult to achieve them all without compromising some. Since formation is a work of art, and not a police action, I always challenge

myself with these questions: How can I accompany a candidate in such a way that he freely and willingly enters into our formation programme, appreciate it, and give the best of himself? How can I seriously challenge a candidate on certain issues [where it is necessary] without discouraging him or undermining his vocational journey with Christ? Serving in a formation house is indeed a “joyful-challenge.” It requires more than human efforts. Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain (Ps 127:1).



Bonaventure Gubazire



## What if the society asked me something in return?

*(To whom much is given, much will be required - Luke 12: 48)*

In his divine providence, it pleased God to entrust the human race with the stewardship of the whole universe. The book of Genesis recounts at length the human call and responsibility of not only finding his fulfillment with other creatures but also caring for them. From the formless wasteland, the creation account displays the order of every creature before creating man. We are of no doubt that before we were born everything was orderly placed in the shaping of the universe. All this was for a purpose. Hence, the Holy Scriptures and all the teachings of the Church insist on the purpose for which human beings are created: to share in the divine love, grace and goodness; that is to live the beatitudes. He created human beings so that knowing Him, they may love one another as they love Him and serve one another as they serve Him.

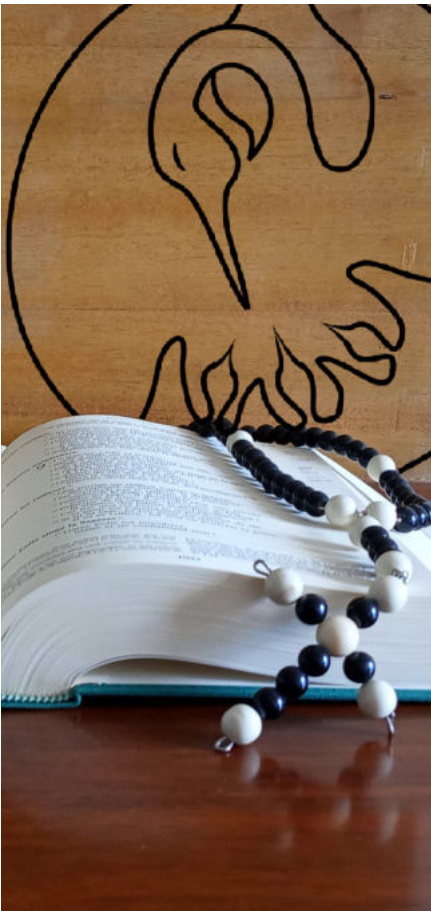
Distinguishing human beings from all other living creatures, God made human beings societal.

That is why they live in families, in villages, in communities, in towns and in cities. Wherever we find ourselves, we form and live in a society of true human beings who are called to promote both divine and human values. This society, though purely human, aims at mirroring God's kingdom on earth.

Similarly, we, members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, wholeheartedly chose to be witnesses of the Kingdom and to share with those willing to receive it, the grace of the Good News (cfr. C&L 5). This is a well-organized, united and mobilized Society in Africa and beyond. Like in any other well-structured society, we aim at participating in the joys and sorrows, needs and challenges, fears and anxieties, successes and failures of one another. And a willing and joyful sharing in the burdens and responsibilities within our communities build up communion. In all these societies, re-



ligious or secular, much has been given to us by God through our fellow human beings. But again, we must remain mindful that the much we receive, the more is expected from us in return. The love, the kindness, the care and so many more gifts, graces and blessings that God bestows on us, something in return is obviously expected from us.



## *The society of the people of God*

Relying on a sole and a mere appointment that is far beyond an employment, we the members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, share in the one society of the people of God. As Missionaries and perpetuators of the Gospel, we are often sent into a world or a society unknown to us. Despite that phenomenon, we are always well received and accepted to be members of our new societies where we are sent. Like true family members, the people of God care for us. They give us food to eat, they give us to drink and in their little ways they cater for our basic needs. In other words, they make us feel at home with them.

They are like open doors that align with our various missions. They unceasingly show us the way forward where things do not seem to be so clear. They support and assist us. They defend and plead for us. They pray for us. They advise us. They teach us the things we do not know. They are indeed wonderful people of God; a gift to us Missionaries and to all people of good will. But what if they ask something in return? What am I to offer? Since I have been enjoying their favour, what have I been giv-



ing in return? And as I still enjoy today, what am I giving in return? Surely their kindness does not end; what am I to offer in the days that are to come?

### ***The Society of the Missionaries of Africa***

It's a blessing and a privilege to belong to more than one society. Ours, among many more, is the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. In it we find all kinds of people; true human beings with their strengths and weaknesses as states our Constitutions and Laws. This Society, in its capacity, fully cares for us its members in sickness and in health (C&L 87, § 2). Right from the beginning of our formation up to the time we are called to glory, the Society of the Missionaries of Africa takes care of our common and ordinary needs. The Society provides us with food, water, electricity, accommodation, means of transportation, school fees, official and administrative documents, allowance, internet, better facilities, media subscriptions, health care, etc. All these, among many more, are given to us free of charge. The Society welcomed and accepted us free of charge. In other words, and with no exception, following God's call,

we have come to this Society free of charge; a need to be humble enough.

We are a Society of Priests and Brothers. All as brothers of the same family, we enjoy its motherly care as structured already by the Founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie and his collaborators. Since 1868, the marking year of the foundation of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, much is perpetually being given to us its beloved members. As this society feeds us in a manner that the pelican feeds its young ones, we its members are expected to offer ourselves as living sacrifices to our Society of the Missionaries of Africa and also to the larger society of the people of God. We are fully conscious, even though some of us still complain, that all the basic needs of our various missions are catered for by the Missionaries of Africa. Much is indeed given to us. And as such, much more is therefore expected from us (Luke 12: 48).

### ***What is our participation?***

Our Society, since its foundation, has indeed been kind and patient with us its members. Our expected duty and little participation are: to be committed, to curse laziness and wake up from sleep, to remain



alive and fully active. Like any common life, the fundamental principle of “take and receive” implies the joining of forces, the convergences of interest and the pooling together of energies. It is a putting together of heads and hands and hearts. There is need for a common search for what is best for the Society, and much readiness and generous cooperation in executing plans. Saint Ireneaus says that the “glory of God is man fully alive”. Similarly, the glory of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa is we, its members, who are fully alive and active, loving and serving, grateful and always ready to give praise for all the benefits we receive from God through the Society. This entails that we ought to be useful and productive wherever we are. *Gaudium et Spes* states: “When men and women provide for themselves and their families in such a way as to be of service to the community as well, they

can rightly look upon their work as a prolongation of the work of the creator, a service to other men and women, and their personal contribution to the fulfillment in history of the divine plan.” We must not only be active in receiving but we must also actively participate in giving something meaningful or substantial to the Society in which we find ourselves. What if the Society of the Missionaries of Africa asked us something in return? What am I to offer?



Paluku N. Hilaire

## For a global ecological synodality: Communion, Participation, and Mission



“What we are waiting for, relying on his promises, is the new heavens and new earth, where uprightness will be at home.” (2 Pt 3: 13)

In his address for the opening of the Synod, the following words of pope Francis give us an idea about the purpose of the synod: “A Church that does not stand aloof from life, but immerses herself in today’s problems and needs, bandaging wounds and healing

broken hearts with the balm of God. Let us not forget God’s style, which must help us: closeness, compassion and tender love.”<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, address for the Opening of the Synod October 9, 2021

Somehow the mission of the Church which calls to be concerned by today’s problems and needs, is not new. It was highlighted at Vatican II with the first number of the pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, *Gaudium et Spes*: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”<sup>22</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n° 1

The newness in the address of the Pontiff, is his call not to forget God’s way of doing: closeness, compassion and tender love. Communion, participation and mission will be possible, when we take them as God’s way. Where can



we practice such a way? It will be first of all in the attitude of listening before that one of communion. For Pope Francis, “a synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.”<sup>1</sup>

A call to listen to each other, to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to listen to our common home where we walk together as God’s people. Our common home remains the place where we can exercise our synodality. “For the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed.” (Rm 8: 19) Therefore, our walking together, our decision making, and our implementing of such decisions should involve not only the entire people of God but mostly the future of our common home. How do we involve our common home in our current synod? How do we involve our common home for a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission?

### **To live Communion**

For the opening of the synod, Pope Francis, quoted Saint Paul VI: “communion, that is, cohesion and interior fullness, in grace, truth and collaboration...”<sup>2</sup>

We cannot forget that time and space are not independent of one another, that the different aspects of the planet, physical, chemical, and biological are interrelated.<sup>55</sup> Cf Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* n 138

How do we live communion? We can again listen to the teaching of Pope Francis: “Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.”<sup>3</sup>

Our synodal reflections and resolutions will be credible, when we will really take in account all the spheres of life, consider our differences as an asset to build a better world. The tendency is to seek a solution for each aspect of life. Coming to such a resolution is “to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system.”<sup>77</sup> Ibid. n 111

The communion we share finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity. So, God’s style of communion and unity can lead us.



### **To achieve Participation:**

A call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. According to the wise Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe: "When we gather together in the moonlit village ground it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his own compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so. Therefore, let us continue with the team spirit and enjoy the power of togetherness. Let's smile not because we don't have problems but because we are stronger than the problems..."<sup>4</sup>

The togetherness calls us to listen to each other, to give space to each one to really participate. The listening of each other creates space for the Holy Spirit. The participation here is a call; together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will

God's way of doing invites and sends us to an ecologically sensitive spirituality. That is to take a position for those who are marginalized

from decision making and to strive for right relationships of Justice and Peace. Following in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus-Christ, we are invited to care not only for our brothers and sisters but also for the environment which we daily receive from God the Creator. Therefore, to achieve our participation as a community, as a Church, it is to care for a sustainable future of our brothers and sisters and of the creation as whole.

### **To open up to Mission**

We understand by mission an apostolic commitment to the world of today. Today's world is composite. It means to take the love of God in the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential areas. It is not only in the midst of the human family but even to the non-human. Therefore, the mission here should be: justice, God's justice at all levels. God's way of justice in the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential issues. So, the effort to form ecological consciousness to protect the common home is an element of God's manner of justice. We are missionaries of God's justice in the world, when we appreciate the good things of our common home and commit

ourselves to respect and to ensure its continued generosity for us.

As Christians we break the body and drink the blood of Christ daily. As human beings, to live, daily we must break the body and shed the blood of creation. Therefore, the mission of the Church; “to become true to herself, she needs to resist the pressures of consumerism and materialism and encourage her members to be more authentic in living out their mission through action ... at individual, local, and political levels.<sup>5</sup>

As human beings, our common mission is to take care of our com-

mon home lovingly, skillfully and reverently.

The new heavens and new earth, where uprightness will be at home, the object of our hope, will not merely be a dream, if a global ecological synodality is the aim of our journeying together.

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<sup>1</sup> Pape François, 17 octobre 2015

<sup>2</sup> Cf Pope Paul VI, *Angelus*, October 11, 1970

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, n 137

<sup>4</sup> Chinua Achebe

<sup>5</sup> Deane Celia Drummond, *Handbook in Theology and Ecology*, p 147



Daniel P. Nana

## Antonio Martínez Lopez 1936 - 2020



<b>Born in:</b>	Murcia, Spain on 14/02/1936
<b>Sp Year:</b>	Maison-Carrée, Algeria on 26/09/1955
<b>Oath:</b>	Heverlee, Belgium on 04/07/1959
<b>Priesthood:</b>	Madrid, Spain on 29/01/1960
<b>Died at:</b>	Madrid, Spain on 05/04/2020

Antonio Martínez was born on February 14, 1936 in Murcia, diocese of Cartagena-Murcia. His father was a labourer, and his mother took care of the family of five children, all boys. A modest yet dignified family with deep Christian convictions. He was admitted to the minor seminary in 1947 and then to the major seminary, where he studied philosophy for three years. At this seminary, Antonio felt the desire to become a missionary in Africa. The reports of the rector to the White Fathers could not have been more complimentary: good qualifications, good judgment, kind and determined, excellent relations with others. As for his missionary vocation, the rector

wrote in the language of the time: "he is ready to face any challenge."

He was admitted to the novitiate at Maison-Carrée in 1955. It was a significant change for him: going to a foreign country, another continent, leaving his mother tongue behind, living with non-Spanish companions, different food... All that was not obvious for a 20-year-old Spaniard in 1955. However, Antonio accepted these changes with some grace. The Novice Master, Father Pierre Grilou, a man, blessed with a fine eye and a wealth of experience, wrote at the end of the novitiate: "Antonio exhibits a balanced set of qualities; he is someone who seems to have great potential".



Antonio began his theology studies in 1956: the first year in Thibar, the second in Carthage and the last two in Heverle because of health problems. He took his oath in Heverle in July 1959 and was ordained a priest on January 29, 1960, in Madrid as the Spanish province wanted the Missionaries of Africa to be better known.

### **Appointments in Rome, then in Spain**

His first appointment was to study philosophy in Rome, but he could not continue due to health problems. He was appointed to Spain to regain his strength. He joined the Logroño Formation Centre, where he taught history of philosophy. However, Antonio wanted to go to Africa: teaching was not his favourite activity.

### **Appointment to Rwanda**

In 1962, he was appointed to Rwanda and began learning Kinyarwanda, a beautiful language, which is very difficult for non-Bantu people. Antonio learned Kinyarwanda quickly and satisfactorily. Later, his regional wrote: "Antonio knows Kinyarwanda very well"; his colleagues also thought so. The language of a people is the gateway to feel and to under-

stand its culture, so Antonio became a fine connoisseur of the Rwandan culture, which later allowed him to swim with a certain elegance even in the troubled waters of the history of Rwanda.

In June 1963, he was appointed curate in a parish. Six months later, he was appointed to strengthen the team in Cyanika, which at Christmas 1963 was experiencing a certain number of killings. The superiors put their confidence in him from the very beginning by placing him in particularly complicated situations. Most of Antonio's apostolic work was to be in the parish except for a year and a half as chaplain in charge of the Xaveri Youth Movement in Kigali, which was not his forte.

### **Parish priest and community leader**

He worked in several parishes from 1968 onwards as a parish priest and community leader. That was his field. He displayed all the qualities that his formators saw in him from his youth. Having many strings to his bow he was able to take initiatives for an in-depth evangelization. His knowledge of the Rwandan language and culture and a natural sense of authority gave him a certain influence over



others, and he knew how to handle it well. His prudence and discretion - some say he was too discreet - made him well accepted by Rwandans of different sensibilities. He was also an ecclesiastical judge, a position he held very well. The regionals wrote: "He is competent, optimistic; the confreres like to be with him, and he knows how to welcome visitors."

### **Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Ruhengeri**

By 1994, Antonio was the parish priest of the large and ancient parish of Rwaza in the diocese of Ruhengeri. When President Juvénal Habyarimana's plane was attacked on Easter Wednesday, Antonio was at the Benedictine Sisters of Kigufi, on the shores of Lake Kivu, some 80 kilometres from Rwaza, where his confreres were. He tried to reach them, but the roadblocks prevented him. He was then evacuated to Goma, in Congo, and Europe. He did not know what had happened to his colleagues and what exactly was happening in the country. The situation was confusing. The uncertainty of the situation was painful for him. When he got to Spain, he tried to get information and to make contacts to return to Rwanda as soon as possible. He was one of the first to

settle in Bujumbura.

But the mission received from his superiors was to return to Rwanda to make contact with the Church and the country's new reality. The airport in Kigali was not yet open. From Bujumbura, Antonio, together with Stany de Jamblinne, began to make contact with the four bishops, the priests and the Christians of Rwanda, as well as with our two confreres who had remained in Nyagahanga. We knew that two other confreres were assassinated in April 1994: Fathers André Caloone and Joaquim Vallmajo. When he visited the parishes, Antonio saw the destruction of buildings and the ransacking of personal belongings; at the end of August 1994, cows were grazing in the courtyard of the bishop's house in Ruhengeri; and nothing but desolation in the courtyard of Nyundo.

In October, Antonio moved to Rwaza with two other confreres. There were a good number of people there. He resumed his apostolic activities. The bishop of Ruhengeri was in exile, and no diocesan priest was present in the diocese. Antonio was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Ruhengeri with all the powers and duties of a bishop.



The task was immense, and the security very fragile. Despite the troubled situation, one great joy was the commitment and generosity of the laity in the absence of priests: the leaders of the small basic communities and the catechists continued to gather the Christians to pray together and help the poorest of the poor. The Christians welcomed the "bapadiri" with great joy.



Cathedral of Ruhengeri

In November 1994, the presbyterium was composed of the Apostolic Administrator and six other Europeans, two Pallottine Fathers, one Carmelite, two Marianist Fathers, and another white Father. Brother Gilbert Gryspeerdt was also there.

In this delicate and extreme situation, Antonio displayed his great potential. Since I am unable to describe everything, I will highlight two points:

At the end of four years as Apostolic Administrator of Ruhengeri, the diocese was on its feet and in operation. Of course, many people were involved in the process: laypeople, religious and priests, but Antonio was at the helm of this boat, moving in very turbulent waters.

The vision of the future: the bishop of the diocese, Bishop Phocas Nikwigize, the diocesan priests, and the major seminarians were all in exile, mainly in Goma. In collaboration with other African episcopal conferences, Antonio decided to send the major seminarians, accompanied by some diocesan priests, to continue their priestly formation in Zambia. Over time, this measure proved to be very fruitful. Many of these seminarians



have been ordained priests enriched by contact with other cultures and other local churches, which has helped them to broaden their horizons and put problems into perspective.

With the bishop of Ruhengeri missing, the question remained: Will Antonio be appointed bishop?



Land of a thousand hills

That was the wish of some of his close collaborators. The Vatican opted for a diocesan priest from Kibungo, Kizito Bahujimihiho, as bishop.

His job as Apostolic Administrator was carried out in a very fragile, sometimes hostile, security situation. A White Father, Guy Pinnard, was murdered on February 2, 1997 while distributing the Eucharist; a Rwandan diocesan priest was also killed and foreign personnel near the bishop's residence; gunfire was heard inside the bishop's residence. In any case, Antonio showed himself to be a prudent man. The words of the book of Proverbs became true in him: "The prudent man acts with wisdom". The elegance with which Antonio performed these complex functions in convulsed times was admirable. "The prudent man hides what he knows". It was difficult to know what he thought.

Antonio wanted to remain in the country, but his physical health at the end of his service as Apostolic Administrator needed attention and care. He also needed a good rest to deal with the strong emotions he had experienced in the last years. Reflecting on these years, the words that we find in the letter to the Colossians come to my



mind: "I complete in my flesh what is lacking in the trials of Christ for his Body, which is the Church". Antonio Martinez remained a man of the Church.

Spain, then back to Rwanda.

To recover his strength, Antonio stayed in Spain from 1998 to 2001. He had an operation on his intestines, from which he suffered the after-effects until the end of his life. He did not get actively involved in Spain; he desired to return to Rwanda. As it was not fitting to return to the diocese of Ruhengeri so as to allow the young bishop to function at ease, the archbishop of Kigali, Mgr. Thaddée Ntihinyurwa offered him a mission that suited him: episcopal vicar for the Consecrated Life and chaplain at the monastery of the Carmelite Sisters of Nyamirambo Kigali. The provincial of the White Fathers asked him to join the community of CELA, now transformed into the Lavigerie Missionary

Centre. Antonio returned to Rwanda happy. He had a few more years of fruitful mission, appreciated by all. However, he had health problems which he did not complain about.

### ***He returned to Spain for good.***

However, he returned urgently to Spain in July 2017 because of his health. The doctors were slow in making the right diagnosis: Meniere's disease. There were other health problems. It was hard for him: stays in hospital or in retirement home with a possible return to community, which was his main desire. He still wanted to return to Rwanda, but his strength diminished. God the Father called him back on April 5, 2020, Palm Sunday. A great missionary finished his race on earth. Rest in peace, dear Antonio!

Pello Sala



## Walter Seyfried 1940 - 2022



<b>Born in:</b>	Leegebruch, Germany on 04, 08/1940
<b>Sp Year:</b>	Hörstel, Germany on 15/08/1965
<b>Oath:</b>	Vals, France on 21/06/1969
<b>Priesthood:</b>	Paderborn, Germany on 11/07/1970
<b>Died at:</b>	Trier, Germany On 16/01/2022

On August 4, 1940, Walter was born in Leegebruch, near Berlin. The war and its aftermath marked the first six years; family life suffered. In the constellation of the Nazi system, the bi-national marriage, his mother being Italian, also had significant consequences and posed a psychological challenge for the mother. According to Walter's notes, his father left the church during the Nazi regime; became a "believer in God," only to return to the church later. After relocating several times, the family eventually found a home near Paderborn in western Germany. His father, Werner, was a technical worker and his mother, Johanna

Maria, took care of the household and the education of Walter and his two brothers.

The unstable circumstances also affected Walter's education. He did not attend school until 1947 in Kirchborchen; then, he moved to the elementary school in Paderborn a year later. From 1953 to 1958, he attended the White Fathers' 'Progymnasium' in Rietberg before moving to Großkrotzenburg. Although he intended to be a missionary, he transferred to the Paderborn City High School in 1959 and graduated in 1963.

With more than 20 other White Father candidates, Walter arrived at the seminary in Trier in 1963 to



study philosophy. It was the last big class, but only three were ordained priests out of more than 20 students. We are talking about the years of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and its consequences.

He returned to the Missionaries of Africa, studied philosophy in Trier. He did his novitiate in Hörstel and moved to Vals, France, for his theological studies. He took his OATH on June 21, 1969, and was ordained a priest on July 11, 1970, in Paderborn.

### ***In Mali, Congo and Burkina***

Walter was appointed to Mali and began his language course in Faladye in November 1970; he would remain there as curate. However, he had to return to Germany for health reasons. He lived in our community in the parish of St. Monica in Cologne until 1976. His wish to return to Africa became a reality in 1976, but not to Mali; he accepted an appointment to Congo. He joined the White Fathers' community in the parish of Vieux Kilo, in the Diocese of



The road to Kilo, Diocese of Bunia, 2010



Bunia. His main areas of work were pastoral ministry and especially school catechesis. But he felt overwhelmed and asked the provincial to end his service for various reasons when he returned home in 1979. He returned to Germany in August 1979. He received medical treatment and then assumed some responsibilities in the province's administration, in pastoral work and the accompaniment of benefactors.

In December 1984, Walter returned to Africa. He was appointed to Burkina Faso and became bursar at the minor seminary of Tionkuy, in the diocese of Nouna. The bursar's office did not take up all of his time, so he could still teach Latin.

### ***An unfortunate incident***

An accident on June 23, 1992, shattered all his plans. It was the beginning of summer vacation, and Walter was driving some students to the bus station in town. On his way back he saw a ram on the road, tied to an iron spike about 30 cm long. Walter stepped on the rope, which turned into a projectile, and the rod penetrated his head. Walter remained calm and went back to the city, to the hospital. The doctors were overw-

helmed and transferred Walter to the capital. On his last day of work in Burkina, a French surgeon was able to remove the iron. The iron bar had penetrated the head, but the brain and sensory organs were not affected. Walter was still able to continue his activities in the minor seminary for a few years, but his health deteriorated, and he returned to Germany for good in January 1997.

### ***In Germany***

Walter stayed under medical supervision, spending the following years in the communities of Linz, Dillingen and Hörstel. He helped out in the chaplaincy as much as his strength would allow, but he was no longer willing or able to accept a permanent assignment. In 2008 he moved to Trier, where his career as an African missionary had begun. In December 2021, doctors diagnosed him with cancer; the metastases had meanwhile spread throughout his body. He died on January 16, 2022. May he rest in peace!

Hans Vöcking



## Armand Garneau 1930 - 2022



<b>Born in:</b>	St-Adrien, Canada on 09/01/1930
<b>Sp Year:</b>	St-Martin, Canada on 13/08/1951
<b>Oath:</b>	Eastview, Canada on 18/06/1955
<b>Priesthood:</b>	St-Ferdinant, Canada on 04/02/1956
<b>Died at:</b>	Sherbrooke, Canada on 19/01/2022

**F**ather Armand Garneau was born on January 9, 1930, in Saint-Adrien d'Irlande in the diocese of Quebec. His parents were Louis Garneau and Marie-Louise Gardner. He was baptized on January 10, 1930, and did his elementary school in Saint-Adrien d'Irlande and his secondary school at the seminary of Quebec.

He joined the novitiate of the White Fathers at Saint-Martin de Laval on August 4, 1951, and took the habit of the Missionaries of Africa on August 13. On August 18, the following year, he began his theological studies at the White Fathers' scholasticate in Vanier, a suburb of Ottawa. He took his

missionary oath on June 18, 1955.

During his time of formation, he manifested good intelligence, but he was relatively slow. He had difficulty expressing his thoughts. He was very sensitive and refined but lacked a certain self-confidence. He was polite, shy, helpful and very devoted. He came across as a well-balanced person.

### ***A lifetime in Burkina***

He was ordained a priest on February 4, 1956, and left for Africa on September 12. Armand was appointed to the newly founded Diocese of Koupéla in Burkina Faso. He arrived in Zorgho parish on October 22, 1956. Armand was



the first White Father in the new Diocese of Zorgho. He was appointed to Zabré, where he spent ten years as curate in 1958. In 1968, he was transferred to Koupéla, where he spent almost ten years as curate. However, he returned to Canada on leave in 1977. Armand attended a 30-day retreat and a three-month refresher course at Laval University. He also took a course in Sacred Scripture.

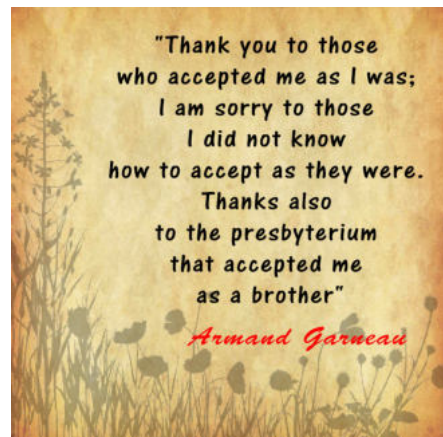
Upon returning to Burkina, he went back to Zorgho, where he became parish priest in August 1980 and worked for more than 12 years. Armand was in Jerusalem in 1982 for the 30-day retreat and the biblical session. He was appointed to a new parish in 1994: La Toden, 250 kilometres from Zorgho, where he had already been curate. In 1995, he was appointed to Bitou, but transferred to Méguet two years later. It was there that he celebrated the Thanksgiving Mass of his golden jubilee as a priest on January 28, 2006. He returned to Canada between June and August of the same year.

The time finally came for him to return definitively to his country in 2008. The Provincial thanked him for all the years he devoted to the Diocese of Koupéla: "Today,

we want to pay a vibrant tribute to Father Armand Garneau who devoted 52 years of his life and his best physical and spiritual strength to building the Archdiocese of Koupéla, of which 14 years were devoted to the construction of the parish of Méguet. Thank you, Father Armand, for all this discreet but very efficient work".

And Father Garneau replied: "Thank you to those who accepted me as I was; I am sorry to those I did not know how to accept as they were. Thanks also to the presbyterium that accepted me as a brother".

Armand was the last White Father to leave the Diocese of Koupéla 52 years after his arrival, on June 21, 2008.





### **In Canada**

Armand returned to Canada for good. He would spend only two months in Lennoxville but did not like it very much there; he was rather a loner, spoke little and tersely answered our questions.

He would later ask the provincial to allow him to live with his older sister in a retirement home in Thetford Mines. He considered that sister his second mother, his mother having died when he was still very young. She took care of him a lot as a child, and he said that it was now his turn to take care of her. Indeed, she was almost blind and deaf. She could no longer stay in her home and had to be moved to a nursing home. The health of both of them gradually deteriorated. For Armand, his memory was failing, and he was placed in a small private residence for the elderly.

In 2017, he was given a room at the Cardinal-Vachon residence in Quebec City. Once his health was restored, he wanted to move to Sherbrooke. Thus, in January 2018, he was asked to move to our home in Sherbrooke, from where he could easily see his sister. However, he became ill again on April 30 and was hospitalized in

Thetford Mines; he was 90 years old and confused.

His cognitive faculties became weak. He no longer recognized his colleagues nor able to remember recent events. He developed lung problems at the beginning of January 2022, fell in his room, and was hospitalized. At the hospital, he was tested for Covid-19 and found positive. After a few days, he regained his strength and thought of leaving the hospital. But then, his condition deteriorated rapidly the very day he was to return to the Centre, and the doctors decided to keep him in the hospital. Unfortunately, there was nothing more they could do for him at that moment. He was placed in palliative care; his agony lasted about a week, he was in a coma the last two days before his death. He left us very peacefully on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, at 12:30 a.m. in the presence of his niece Sylvie Garneau. May he rest in peace!

Jacques Charron



## Victor Grégoire 1930 - 2022



<b>Born in:</b>	Valleyfield, Canada on 09/04/1930
<b>Sp Year:</b>	St-Martin, Canada on 12/08/1950
<b>Oath:</b>	's-Heerenberg, Netherlands le 21/07/1954
<b>Priesthood:</b>	Monteviot, Scotland on 26/05/1955
<b>Died at:</b>	Sherbrooke, Canada on 30/01/2022

Victor Grégoire wrote in our Mission Magazine, 4/1986: "I was born in Valleyfield on April 9, 1930. The family was large, with six boys and three girls, of whom I was the second to last, a little more spoiled than the others. The religious atmosphere was that of the Canadian homes of the time, with the first Friday of the month and Lenten penances. Since I lived near a convent of Dominican nuns, I did part of my elementary school there. As a six-year-old Mass server, I was dressed in white, the Dominican habit! The Scout Movement greatly influenced my vocation

and opened me to the outside world. I animated young people and underprivileged children. However, that didn't lead me to the priesthood, but to choose a missionary life. In fact, our scouting fostered the vocation of young people to the White Fathers and the Foreign Missions Society."

At the end of the year of the novitiate, on July 23, 1951, Father Armand Landreville, novice master, signed the following evaluation of Victor: "His judgment is right and balanced, both in theory and in practice. He is very thorough. He has an energetic will. He is very diligent, both in his studies and in



manual work. Well-balanced. He is in good health and dresses very well. Well mannered. A little shy, but this flaw disappears quickly. Good candidate on whom the superiors can count."

He was appointed to the scholasticate in 's-Heerenberg for three years. He would finish his theology at the new scholasticate in Monteviot. He wrote: "We had an international scholasticate at 's-Heerenberg in Holland. They were looking for volunteers, but the novice master told me, "You have no choice". You are one of the best in English. So I was designated as a volunteer! The Canadian candidates did not last long at 's-Heerenberg. The three Canadians who preceded us all left. In 1950, Europe was emerging from the war, and food restrictions were still being felt. Perhaps there was also a difference in mentality between Europeans and Canadians? My opinions were considered "strange". It took six months to adapt. This transition period facilitated my integration into Africa: I had already struggled to adapt to another culture, mentality, and language. I spent three years in Holland. I was ordained a deacon and sent to the scholasticate in Monteviot, Scotland, to finish my theology. I was

ordained a priest there on May 26, 1955."

### **A positive evaluation**

Theo van Asten (future Superior General) wrote in his evaluation in Monteviot on March 15, 1955: "His character is well-balanced, solid and reliable. He has an affectionate heart but all his feelings are well controlled. He is rather reserved in his relations. He is most adaptable to circumstances. An amiable kind of man, charming confrère, simple and natural politeness. He is punctual, well-mannered and always clean. Serious and industrious. A reliable subject, a promising missionary. I am whole-heartedly in favour of his admission to the priesthood."

With appointments in mind, the staff wrote to Rome: "He would do well as a teacher in a minor seminary of either French or English language, in mission." His path was all mapped out: "I was sent to study for a degree in education at the University of London in the following subjects: Divinity (Theology), History and Physical Education." He would later obtain a master's degree in the English language from the University of Montreal in October 1962. Cum Laude.



## **Alternating between Ghana and Canada**

In 1957, Victor served first in Ghana, in a parish, in Nandom, Dagari region. He learned the Dagara language before teaching in the minor seminaries of Tamale and Wa, the diocese of Bishop Peter Porekuu Dery (future cardinal). Victor was appreciated as a teacher, a rector affectionately known as Uncle Vic.

He returned to Canada for missionary animation in 1966 (for two years) and in 1981. In 1984 he became the head of the first phase of formation for M. Afr. candidates in Ottawa in 1984. The Superior General Robert Gay wrote to him from Rome when he was called back to Montreal as assistant provincial to Denis-Paul Hamelin: "Dear Vic, I know very well that you are doing an excellent job in the first phase, something that is in line with your profession. But you have made my day by agreeing to leave this service. With Denis-Paul and Raynald Pelletier, you will form a provincial team capable of maintaining the missionary vitality of our province. Your experience with youth in Ghana and Canada has prepared you well for our missionary animation work.

We share the missionary responsibilities of the Church of Canada according to our charism. May you find joy in serving with the One in whose name we are in mission". Victor held this position for six years.

In 1990, he returned to Ghana, to Tamale, where he served as Regional Secretary and then Regional Bursar. Upon his final departure from Ghana in 1996, his provincial Gerry Murphy wrote, "We will be sorry to see Vic leave Ghana. He has been an efficient Regional Bursar, as well as a bursar of the Regional house. He has been a good advisor to the Regional Superior and the epitome of discretion."

## **New mission**

Victor spent the last twenty years of his life living on St. Hubert Street, Montreal, where he was involved in ministry and an assistant to the Superior of the house. In 2010, he asked to live with the confreres in Sherbrooke. As of 2020, Victor seemed to have lost touch with reality. His cognitive faculties were diminished, and he no longer recognized his confreres. Victor had trouble breathing in his last months. He was in constant need of oxygen. He was moved to the palliative care section and died



on Sunday, January 30, 2022.

The Provincial Superior of Canada received messages from two confreres, former students of the Wa minor seminary, following the news of his death. From Francis Bomansaan, M.Afr. (in Kenya). "Dear Real, I just read about the demise of Vic Grégoire. I wish you all in Canada and his family my heartfelt condolences. Vic was a great man, a great formator and teacher in the Minor Seminary. He is positively remembered for his discipline. He made an indelible impact / influence on all who had him as Rector and teacher. May the Lord grant him eternal rest!" From Mgr. Richard Kuuia Bawobr, M.Afr., Bishop of Wa, Ghana. "Dear Real, Fr. Vic Grégoire marked all of us as we made our first steps in the Minor Seminary. He treated each one of us with great respect, little though we were, coming from poor rural families. He called us "gentlemen" and that made us really try to live up to that. Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me" (Mark 10:13). "Uncle Vic's" attention to us made us love him instead of being afraid of him, the Rector. It opened the way for us to be bold enough to share with him our doubts and joys and our vocational searching.

His attention for cleanliness, correct language, dress and good academic work made us all proud to be his students in St. Francis Xavier Minor Seminary. Outside of the Minor Seminary, he was known, loved and respected. So were his seminarians wherever they were. We are indeed grateful for his life. May Uncle Vic rest in God's perfect peace! May the seeds of the Gospel he has sown in our hearts grow and bear abundant fruit."

The confreres of Sherbrooke celebrated the funeral of Victor Grégoire in private due to the Covid-19 virus. Eventually, there will be a farewell ceremony for family and friends in Sherbrooke. The ashes will be laid in St. Anthony of Padua Cemetery (Sherbrooke), in the Missionaries of Africa plot.

J. Cormier

## Missionaries of Africa

**Father Jean Devrièsère** of the Diocese of Lille, France, who died in Bry-sur-Marne, France, on the 13th of April 2022, at the age of 96 years, of which 69 years of missionary life in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Ireland, Great Britain, and France.

**Father Jacques van Nieuwenhove** of the Diocese of Mechelen-Bruxelles, Belgium, who died in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, on the 13th of April 2022, at the age of 94 years, of which 69 years of missionary life in Italy, Burundi, Belgium and The Netherlands.

**Father Francis Kangwa** of the Diocese of Mansa, Zambia, who died in Mbezi, Tanzania, on the 14th of April 2022, at the age of 51 years, of which 21 years of missionary life in Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

**Father Josef Hochheimer** of the Diocese of Freiburg, Germany, who died in Hechingen, Germany, on the 18th of April 2022, at the age of 82 years, of which 56 years of missionary life in Burkina Faso and Germany.

## Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

**Sister Johanna Robben** ( Sr. Gaudentis). She died in Boxtel, the Netherlands, on the 19th of March 2022, at the age of 86, of which 62 years of religious missionary life in Tanzania and The Netherlands.

**Sister Jeanne (Adriana) Simons** (Anacleta Marie). She died in Boxtel, the Netherlands, on the 28th of March 2022, at the age of 90, of which 67 years of religious missionary life in Tanzania, Kenya and The Netherlands.

**Sister Annemarie Müller** (Agritia). She died in Köln-Klettenberg, Germany, on the 9th of April 2022, at the age of 84, of which 61 years of religious missionary life in Burkina Faso, and Germany.

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