

Petit ECHO

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**Formation in view of
prophetic witness**



MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA





Throughout the years and the different stages of my formation, I had good formators engaged in the charism of the Missionaries of Africa. At the end of my theological studies and after my ordination, I felt a pleasant sense of freedom and pride at having succeeded in reaching my goal; however, I soon realised that my apprenticeship had to continue.

Already in my first pastoral insertion, I realised that I needed to continue my formation in human maturity, spirituality and in community life. I was confronted with a constantly changing world that forced me to learn many things outside of the comfort of the classroom.

I understand that life is a continuous learning process. I know that by taking on challenges we acquire knowledge and skills, yet the road ahead is always uphill.

Today, I'm wondering whether the treasure is at the end of the road or if the road is the treasure itself. One day I'll know.

Let us keep going back to God's own "style", which is closeness, compassion and tender love. God has always operated that way. If we do not become this Church of closeness with attitudes of compassion and tender love, we will not be the Lord's Church.

Pope Francis, Saturday, 9 October 2021

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Formation in view of prophetic witness

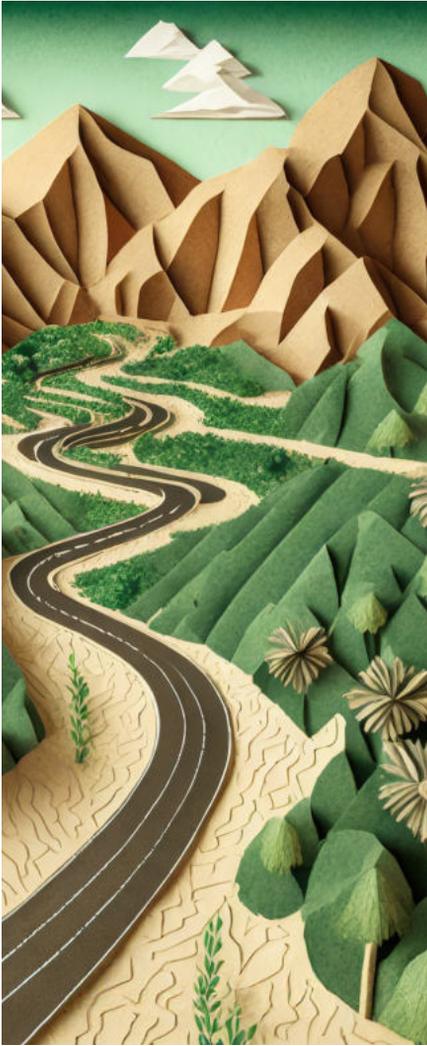
Introduction: In a world marked by uncertainty and rapid change, the call to prophetic witness takes on renewed significance. The role of a prophet has always been to speak the truth, challenge the status quo, and guide society towards justice, compassion and moral clarity. Following the call of our Founder to “be apostles and nothing but apostles”, our formation program must be apostolic in nature, focused upon mission and prepare candidates towards prophetic witness. This editorial explores the Missionaries of Africa formation, particularly the spiritual, apostolic and missionary dimension of formation necessary for candidates to become prophetic witnesses.

Prophetic tradition

The prophetic tradition has deep roots in human history. There are outstanding figures like Moses, Isaiah, and Amos in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and well known people like Mahatma Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara etc. in more recent history. Cardinal Lavignerie being a prophet in his own time said “I am a man, injustice towards other men is revolting to my heart. I am a man, cruelty towards men horrifies me. I am a man, and what I would like to be done to give me freedom, honor, the sacred bonds of the family, I want to do in order to restore to the sons of this unfortunate race, family, honor and freedom.” The above-mentioned individuals were called to challenge prevailing norms and inspire societal transformation. Their words and actions embodied an unwavering commitment to truth, justice, and the betterment of humanity. The candidate who will embrace the life of a



**Leo Laurence
Maria Joseph
General Assistant**



Missionary of Africa through his oath, is called to emulate the example of the prophets in being an agent of transformation in Africa and the African world. Pope Francis emphasized that “an apostle is not a manager, he is not a learned lecturer, he is not an IT wizard. The apostle is a witness.” In this sense, a Missionary of Africa is not member of a NGO but someone who is rooted in Christ and as a witness to his faith engages in the transformation of humanity in Africa and the African world.

Formation for prophetic witness

In order to prepare future missionaries, the Society offers a holistic formation with the healthy balance between all aspects of formation [intellectual, spiritual, human, apostolic, missionary etc.]. To engage in prophetic witness, individuals must undergo a deliberate and sustained process of formation and transformation. In other words, there must be a paradigm shift in the classical seminary formation program and move to the periphery

[formation in view of prophetic witness]. Cardinal Lavignerie emphasises this: “What I need now are men, men animated by the apostolic spirit of courage, faith and self-denial, who would come and join the workers of the first hours. In truth I can promise them nothing of what the world promises, neither riches, nor grandeur, nor human joys. But quite the contrary, poverty, self-denial (...) and perhaps at the end of it all, a



martyr's death ... Our Lord did not say otherwise than what I repeat in his name: 'In mundo pressuram habebitis' (note: from Jn 16:33, RSV: "In the world you face persecution) and the Apostles followed Him without ever losing heart." Therefore, all formation programs must follow this attitude of self-denial and apostolic courage.

Spiritual formation: prophets often draw strength from a deep well of spirituality. Formative practices like prayer [visibility], meditation, contemplation and reflection on sacred texts connect them with the divine source of wisdom and courage. First and foremost, the candidates are called to be men of prayer. Therefore, the formation program has to emphasize both personal and community prayers so that future missionaries become men of prayer. "Without spiritual formation, the fabric of our missionary lives would be incomplete and, in the long run, would disintegrate."

Integrity in ministry: prophets are known for their unwavering commitment to moral principles. Ethical formation involves not only understanding right from wrong but also practicing moral courage in the face of adversity. The candidates should be prepared sufficiently in the integrity of ministry with zero tolerance to any form of abuse [alcohol, substances, financial, sexual authority, etc.] because any form of abuse is a sin against God.

Intellectual formation: prophets are not mere zealots; they are critical thinkers who engage with the issues of their time. Intellectual formation fosters the ability to analyze complex problems, propose solutions, communicate effectively and be part of positive change in the world. Consequently, philosophy and theological studies should not remain a mere intellectual exercise but an opportunity to immerse into the lives of people by reading the signs of the times and acting upon them.

Intercultural community formation: Pope Francis highlighted that "prophecy is above all communitarian. It is the community that bears prophetic witness." The candidates must have the capacity to enter into a relationship with another person. In the houses of formation, candidates are initiated to live in intercultural communities whereby they learn to encounter and dialogue with the others. Intercultural community living



and witnessing is a non-negotiable aspect of every Missionary of Africa.

Pastoral (jpic-ed) formation: prophetic witness requires a deep well of empathy and compassion. Formation in this regard involves understanding the suffering of others and actively working to alleviate it. Pope Francis underlines that “Evangelizers thus take on the smell of the sheep.” Thus all formation houses and stage communities should introduce candidates to the peripheries so as to take on the smell of the sheep. All such contacts with the periphery through pastoral work must radically impact one’s life and change the mediocre attitude of a candidate.

Challenges in contemporary formation

In a world increasingly characterized by materialism, polarization, and a relentless pursuit of personal gain, ambition for power and money, the formation of individuals for prophetic witness faces significant challenges. Consumerism, individualism, and lack of authenticity and imbalance in personal life can hinder the growth of prophetic voices. Pope Francis in his address to the Synod of Bishops underlined that: “Clericalism is a whip, it is a scourge, it is a form of worldliness that defiles and damages the face of the Lord’s bride; it enslaves God’s holy and faithful people.” Consequently, the M.Afr formation program must focus on making future missionaries and nothing but missionaries.

Change begins today

In times of injustice, inequality, and environmental crises, prophetic witness is indispensable. Formation for prophetic witness is not a luxury but a necessity. We need individuals who can lead with moral clarity, challenge oppressive systems, and inspire collective action for a just and sustainable world. The Synod on Synodality has now reached its half-way point, and it is mandatory that all candidates embrace this new way of being Church. In other words, the candidates are introduced to work with and for all. The danger is to remain in the comfort zone. The formation program should ensure that candidates are well prepared to go where they are sent to for mission and not just where they want to



go. The mission of the Society and the Church in Africa is supreme over the individual taste and desire of the candidate. To arrive at this openness, a change has to take place today in the hearts of each candidate. The prophetic witness begins today and is not just kept for the future.

Conclusion

Formation in view of prophetic witness is an ongoing journey that demands commitment, self-awareness, and resilience. In an ever-changing world, the voices of prophetic witnesses are vital guides toward a more just and equitable future. It is urgent for the Missionaries of Africa to support the formation of individuals who can courageously embrace the prophetic tradition. Following in the footsteps of many Missionaries of Africa who gave their lives for the mission and transformation of Africa, may the candidates embark on the journey of conversion and be formed to bear witness to truth, justice, and compassion in an ever-evolving world. The formators have a vital role in preparing the future missionaries in view of such prophetic witness.





“Guide us, lord, to discern your will”

Jinja - Uganda



The chapel of the Lavigerie house of Formation house in Jinja

When I was still pondering on what to write, having been invited to participate in the reflection on the topic, “formation in view of prophetic witnesses”, little did I know that inspiration was closer than I imagined: I found this inspiration in our just ended community (Lavigerie Formation house - Jinja) integration session for the 2023-2024 academic year. 44 of us (40 candidates and four members of staff) engaged in this exercise for four days, at the end of which we put all our discussions, reflections, sharing and prayers into a concise formulation of our community project and theme for the year. It is against this background

that I have chosen the theme for our community - “Guide us, Lord, to discern your will” - as the title of this article. Our theme (and indeed, the whole process of the integration session), I believe, expresses sufficiently enough the deep aspiration of a formation community, desiring to be formed as prophetic witnesses of our time. As an outline, I will share my personal experience of formation, then proceed to share some echoes from our community integration session and conclude with what I consider, is the way forward in this journey of formation in view of prophetic witnesses.



Personal experience working in the formation house

On the whole, my experience of working in the formation house has been positive and inspiring. I must admit that it is a very humbling and, at the same time, enriching experience to be privileged to journey with young men filled with so much passion and zeal, dreams and aspirations, talents and gifts as well as fears and anxieties. Put differently, it is humbling accompanying young men on a profound journey of search: search for God, but more existentially, the search for “themselves” - for their dreams and aspirations; in a word, the search for “who they are”. This is the enduring spirit and demand of the journey of discernment for our young brothers in initial formation, and indeed for us all on the journey of life.

Being a witness to such “sacred” journey is certainly a privilege; one cannot remain indifferent to the many factors at play in the lives of the candidates and the formation system as a whole. This, therefore, calls for docility, a deep sense of listening, so that they (the candidates) may continue to ponder on the question, “is God calling me to become a disciple of Jesus

and to be sent like him?” In this context, I understand my work, or rather presence in the formation house, as simply helping to foster an atmosphere conducive for discernment.

In this immensity of the unfolding of God’s gracious call, “come ...follow me” (Lk 9:23), I understand my role to be that of a simple companion to my young brothers, always pondering on what ways my presence may help in the fostering and nurturing of the seed of vocation. Of course, at the end of it all, we have to constantly remind ourselves that God remains the principal agent of formation, and so discerning his voice, together with the candidates, remains the enduring task. Indeed, this is the spirit of the theme of our community for this academic year: praying to the Lord of the harvest to guide us to understand and discern his will to be prophetic witnesses today according to his own heart.

“Learning”, is the word that characterizes, in many ways, my little experience working in the formation house. It is a continuous learning process journeying with the young men. The sharing of their vocation stories, their family backgrounds, the joys and chal-



Noel Kindo and some candidates
Missionaries of Africa

lenges of their everyday life, their youthful energies, sense of creativity and availability, surely does not leave me the same. It invites me constantly to reflect on my own missionary commitment, and ultimately, to continue to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of missionary vocation.

Echoes from our community integration session

This year our community integration session was animated by Br. John Abobo. The four-day session resulted in the formulation of the community project as follows: “To be a prayerful, self-

driven, joyful, responsible and caring community”. Our community theme, on the other hand, is the title of this article – “Guide us, Lord, to discern your will”. Right from the beginning of the session, the animator reminded us that the whole process of integration is more important than the results. By this he meant we should pay attention to all the sharing, deliberations, group discussions, games, prayers - all these seek to help us integrate together as community. Now, I will briefly share some fruits from the session under the headings: “motivations”, “expectations for the academic year”, and “means to achieve the expectations”.

- *Motivations* : this segment of the session was guided by the question, “why am I here in Lavigerie House, Jinja?”. After a moment of personal reflection and sharing in small groups, some of these points came up: to strive to become responsible individuals; seeking adventure and exploration; to foster spiritual growth; seeking to discern God’s will; deepening of faith; to be formed in service oriented life; to cultivate knowledge about justice and peace; pursuing academic growth and



development; developing and living potentials; learning and embracing the evangelical counsels; to learn to embrace diversity and cultural understanding.

-Expectations for the academic year : in the domain of expectations (both individual and communitarian), some of these points came up: to know more about Lavigerie; to deepen our faith; to engage in pastoral activities; to learn other cultures; to foster a sense of unity and shared values; to engage in the process of discernment; academic excellence; faithfulness to manual work; efficient communication; supportive network for studies; discipline; learning the local culture; outreaching; building leadership skills.

-Means to achieve the expectations : observing the community timetable; practice efficient communication; being welcoming to visitors; respecting personal and community boundaries; practicing brotherly love; showing appreciation; to be self-driven in all aspects of formation; active participation; taking initiatives; being accountable; fostering a sense of belonging; using appropriate language; seriousness in pastoral activities; promoting creativity; punctuality in all activities; commitment to studies; having personal timetables; appreciating people's personalities; using available resources wisely and properly; making good use of social media, setting personal goals.



Start of the 2023-2024 academic year at the Lavigerie house of Formation. Jinja, Uganda



**Way forward:
“the future is in God’s hands”**

I would like to conclude my reflection by referring to a spontaneous response I gave to one of our candidates last year. After more than half an hour of formative encounter, sharing on various aspects of formation and life in general, the candidate, in a rather timid voice, asked a question I never anticipated. “Alfred”, he said, “I have a lot of fear, do you think I will make it in formation”. Paralyzed by what to say, after a few dead seconds, a spontaneous response sprung up from nowhere, that “the future is in God’s hands”. Indeed, how could I magically tell if he would make it to the end of his initial formation or not? Isn’t this true for this particular candidate and for each one of us? Aren’t our lives a continues surrender into God’s loving hands every day? Whether as individuals or a Society of prophetic witnesses, don’t we entrust our future into God’s hands? We are, indeed, called to look at

the past with gratitude and embrace the future with hope, in the faith that the Lord walks with his people (cf. Lk 24:13-35).

It is in this understanding that the theme of Lavigerie Formation House-Jinja is relevant to us all: for us here in the formation house and, undeniably, to us all as a Society - called to continue to strive to be prophetic witnesses, guided by the Lord, to discern his will, especially in the face of the current realities of our world that call on us to reach out to the frontiers and peripheries of society.



Alfred Awogyia



Our trademark is charity

Bangaluru - India



Filiyanus Ekka at the Sacrament of Confirmation for some candidates in Bangaluru, India

Introduction

I participated in a vocation camp in one of the dioceses in Northern India. There were over five hundred students (boys) and eighty-two vocation promoters from different congregations and dioceses. The vocation promoters were given three minutes to talk about the charism of their respective dioceses and congregations. Most of the dioceses and congregations branded themselves with their achievements such as prestigious schools, engineering and medical colleges, universities, hospitals they own.

“Come and Join us, be part of the excellence”, such heightened luring phrases were uttered by many Vocation Promoters to attract the young men. “*Excellence, transformation and efficiency*” is the motto of a prestigious Catholic Christian College. “*Excellence and service*” is the motto of another prestigious Catholic Christian University.

We, Missionaries of Africa, what do we have at hand to offer these young men? We offer them the “Apostolic and Prophetic” gift of life. With this in mind I write this article, inspired by the life of our



confrere Fr. Hubertus Zoetemelk (Zutu) M.Afr. whose name was pronounced passionately by the early Christians in Mzuzu Diocese in Malawi. Due to the lack of written facts and events I would like to narrate the oral history which I heard from Sr. Alice Mkan-dawire and the late Fr. Michael Mawelera M. Afr.

We are living in an era of Brands and Trademarks. The Missionaries of Africa motto is “*Be apostles, and nothing but apostles*”. This is the spirit we can offer the young men who would like to join us.

What is the brand of the

Missionaries of Africa? It is “*caritas*” and this Caritas leads us all to be apostles in order to give a prophetic witness. Thus, our formation system must aim at giving prophetic witness.

Insights from the 29th General Chapter

Prophetic Witness is grounded in prophetic solidarity, sometimes also in the midst of suffering. We all can't be prophets but we all, Missionaries of Africa, can give a prophetic witness wherever we are assigned. The see, judge and act method of the 29th General Chapter constantly invites us to reflect and



Filiyanus Ekka with M.Afr candidates at the Bangaluru house of Formation.



implement in our time the theme of prophetic witness, so that through us, people may see rays of hope in times of suffering and difficulties.

On 13 June 2022, Pope Francis addressed all the Missionaries of Africa through the Capitulants of the 29th General Chapter in the Clementine Hall, telling us that we all should be true apostles. "Apostles are witnesses and not proselytes. An Apostle is not a manager, he is not a learned lecturer, he is not an IT wizard but an Apostle is first of all a witness".

Missionary Formation in View of Prophetic Witness

I believe that the first element, right from the beginning of the missionary vocation journey to be a prophetic witness, is dialogue with our master Jesus. Throughout our missionary formation, whether initial or on-going formation, it should be a dialogue, as the Apostles Andrew and Simon Peter had with Jesus Our Lord. Jesus enters into a personal dialogue also with us in the day-to-day discernment process and when in a personal crisis. Our founder Cardinal Lavignerie and our confrere Fr. Hubertus Zoetemelk (Zutu) M.Afr. present to us the following four models of Prophetic Witness.

They are Call, Conviction, Courage and Commitment.

- **Call** : a Missionary of Africa and Prophetic Witness cannot be separated. They are like roots and fruits: the healthier the roots are, the better the fruits. In my experience passing through Initial Formation and now having completed thirteen years of priesthood, I could say that the Lord called his disciples to be his witnesses and it was not by chance. God called Moses, it was not by chance. The Lord God continues to call all Missionaries of Africa and this also is not by chance. God has a plan for us all to be witnesses, whether we believe it or not. So far, I have attended the first and second term confreres sessions. No one has ever said that they are Missionaries of Africa by chance, but all say that God has called them for a special purpose and this special purpose is to be a witness.

A few years back I lived with one of the elderly confreres. He narrated the life story of the salmon fish in the St. Lawrence River in Canada. Most of the Atlantic salmon die after spawning (after laying the eggs). The missionary call to be a prophetic witness is to lay down our lives in order to give



life to many. The spirit of entitlement, paving crooked ways for personal gain or favour is contrary to the spirit of the missionary call to be a prophetic witness. Fr. Hubertus Zoetemelk (Zutu) M.Afr. first mobilised and worked with people in difficult situations to establish St. John's Parish Mzambazi in the year 1940. This was prophetic witness, his spirit bearing fruit in abundance today. Such spirit of prophetic witness we are to cultivate in our formation houses right from the beginning of the initial stage of formation.

- **Conviction** : in a legal setting even in present days, there are many cultures which deny the testimony of women, because males consider it is to be unreliable. Men of the first century Jewish tradition held the same view. Mary Magdalene, because of her conviction, became the first witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Her conviction raised her status to be an apostle to the apostles. Without conviction of intimacy with Jesus Christ in initial and ongoing formation, we cannot give prophetic witness to the people who are entrusted to our care. Prophetic witness is to bring comfort, consolation and offer hope to people who live in external peripheries. In our Society,

the opening of new parishes is a visible sign of the continuity of the prophetic witness which gives us the opportunity to address many difficult issues in a prophetic way. At the same time, handing over parishes without proper dialogue because of some influential person, is contrary to the charism of our Society and contrary to the prophetic witness (data gathered from young confreres who are not comfortable with the handing-over of parishes in Lusaka, Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi).

In the formation houses accompaniment and encouragement of the candidates are a prophetic witness but labelling, categorising, not giving enough space for formation to take place in candidates are contrary to prophetic witness.

- **Courage** : to have courage is an essential virtue in missionary life to give prophetic witness. Having fear to embrace the world with difficulties and challenges such as extreme climatic hardships, language, culture, food and shelter is anti-prophetic witness spirituality. Anti-prophetic witness spirituality leads to be a coward, to stay aloof and become a mere spectator. Anti-prophetic witness encircles missionaries in the cocoons of their comfort zones.



Stanley Lubungo, Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa and Filiyanus Ekka with the community of the Bangaluru house of Formation

One wise person (elderly missionary) said that to be a witness and give prophetic witness, a missionary has to have the HAWK BIRD'S spirituality. A hawk is a majestic bird with exquisite eyesight. It is smart, patient, cautious and courageous. According to tribal mythology when you happen to see a hawk bird in reality or in a dream, they make you aware of your potentialities. It symbolises one's true passion and invites one to follow this passion with courage. We, Missionaries of Africa, are indeed passionate to be prophetic witnesses of the gospel. Why do many bishops invite us to work in their respective dioceses? Because they have known our history of prophetic witness and they see in

us the apostolic virtue of giving prophetic witness.

- **Commitment** : we, Missionaries of Africa, are commissioned to live our lives with dedication and commitment. In holy scripture, Moses was commissioned to liberate Israel from their captivity in Egypt and to lead them to the promised land. Liberation will not only mean taking them out of oppression but it will also create for them a new freedom. A man is sent by God, he has a mission. The important thing is that Moses is being sent and he must go and fulfil the mission entrusted to him by God. In the Missionaries of Africa circles, this is called commitment. Some of us lose enthusiasm



in responding to the mission we are given, and this is a counter-witness to the prophetic witness formation. Some of us have spiritual dryness, and rather than displaying the missionary virtues we demonstrate luxury or wealth. Some of us resist and struggle to avoid commitment by submitting a resignation letter, when our expectations are not met or when we are challenged by our confreres. These are signs of negative prophetic witness.

Indian tribal spirituality suggests the “Rock Snail” spirituality to foster the virtue of commitment. Tribal culture attributes a very important symbolic meaning to the rock snail, when it comes to the virtue of commitment in view of giving prophetic witness. Rock snails are seen as symbols of wisdom, patience and adaptability due to their ability to struggle with difficulties. They symbolise the responsibility of self-care and harmony as well, as they retreat into

their shell for safety. Being known by their slow but steady progress, they represent endurance, determination and resistance. The rock snail, I believe, is reminding us to move forward to give prophetic witness in our on-going and initial formation.

Call, Conviction, Courage and Commitment, these are the four essential elements of prophetic witness, and we, Missionaries of Africa, cannot separate them from our lives and charism.



Filiyanus Ekka



What kind of prophets?

Cebu - Philippines



Paul Johnston with the M.Afr candidates at the home of Formation in Cebu

Be Apostles and nothing but Apostles. These words of our Founder remind us that our call to be Apostles is an integral part of our identity, which raises the question: What does it mean to be an Apostle?

One answer we can give to this question is that an Apostle is a person called to be a prophetic witness in word and deed. This leads us to a further question: What does it mean to be a prophetic witness, especially to the African world of today?

The question of our call to be prophets is not something new and was very much central in our last General Chapter where we were challenged to review different aspects of our existence as a Society asking ourselves the following questions: As Apostles of today, are our commitments and our way of life prophetic enough? What does it mean to be a prophetic witness in the African world today?

As part of our initial formation, we follow at least a basic course on the prophets in which we come



to understand that the Biblical prophets were people who answered the call of God to be His witnesses in the world of their day. Like us, they struggled with doubts and fears. Most of them underwent trials and tribulations. Some wanted to run away when they felt the pressure. They felt they were unworthy or inadequately prepared for their mission to be a prophet. They had plans for their lives, but God's intervention changed those plans. The words the people heard came from the mouth of the prophet, but the message was not theirs. They became vehicles of the word and message of God. They operated in particular situations and different periods, but one of the common things they came to understand was that they could not do it alone. All of this is reflected in phrases I used many times in formation, they were called to "trust the process" and to "let go and let God". If this sounds familiar, it is because it is a reflection of our own vocation journey and the journey of our Society to be prophetic witnesses today.

My own experience

This year, I celebrate 30 years of my missionary oath of which 22 years have been in formation

communities in Ghana, Zambia, India and the Philippines. As a formator, I have encountered many candidates who come to us with the desire to be missionaries and members of our Society. At the different stages of our formation programme, we prepare them - spiritually, intellectually and concretely - for the task ahead. However, in the light of the Capitular Acts of our most recent Chapter and our call to be prophetic witnesses, I ask the question: Does the formation we offer our candidates prepare them to be prophetic witnesses in the African world today?

During our Spiritual Year, our candidates are appointed to a particular pastoral engagement during the weekends. While a member of staff in the Spiritual Year in Kasama, some of our candidates carried out their engagement in the local parish, while others were in the local hospital. On Sunday evening, in teams, we met to share the different pastoral experiences of the weekend. In my team, it was not uncommon for those assigned to the local hospital to say they did nothing. When I asked them clarification, they would say something like "... all I did was sit at the side of the bed listening to a



Paul Johnston as a novitiate formator in Kasama, Zambia

person speaking in a language I could not understand...” When I heard this, I tried to help them to understand that what they were doing was a “Ministry of Presence”. Their presence was important. Their presence spoke volumes. Their presence was what that person needed at that point in their lives. Through their presence, they were allowing God to reach out to the person. For them, being present was a great prophetic witness in that particular place and at that particular moment in time.

The apostolate of being present

Perhaps, as missionaries in our different apostolates, we often find

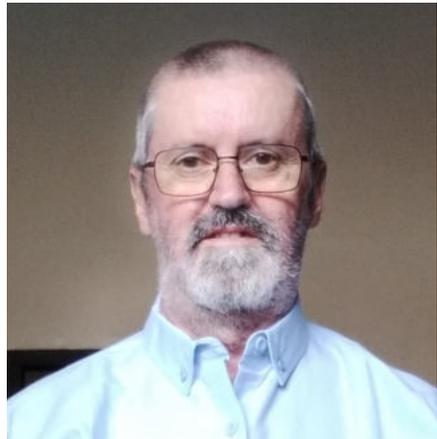
ourselves in similar situations where our main focus is so much on “doing” that we forget the importance of “being present”. Our presence is important. Our presence has an impact. Our presence speaks loudly to those to whom we are sent. Our presence, our desire to be part of the lives of the people to whom we are sent, especially in difficult circumstances, is possibly the greatest prophetic witness we have to offer. In being present to people...taking time to listen to their stories...to spend time with them...we send an important message...God is with you! During such precious moments, we become prophets of God’s message. Our presence is, in itself, prophetic. To



be a prophetic witness today means going beyond what we say, it is more about a way of life...a way of being...a way of being present to others each and every day.

The situations we encounter today, particularly in our call to the African world, are different from the time of the Old Testament prophets; however, there remains a common thread...the need for us, as individuals and as a Society, to be true prophetic witnesses. Our words and deeds need to reflect a positive attitude in the world and in the situation in which we find ourselves. This applies to us as individuals, to our communities and our Society as a whole. We are called not only to be Apostles and nothing but Apostles...we are called to be prophetic witnesses through our words and deeds. This is not something that starts on the day

we profess our Oath...it needs to be a part of our formation from the very beginning. The formation we offer to our candidates today must reflect this same attitude...this call to be prophetic witnesses. We must realize we are not only preparing future Missionaries of Africa...we are preparing future prophets!



Paul Johnston



Formation in View of Prophetic Witness

The 29th General Chapter identified a lack of applying the *Vademecum* properly, the spirit of entitlement, misunderstanding of freedom, lack of deep motivation, lack of availability for certain missions, and certain attitudes marked by clericalism preventing candidates from being true missionary witnesses (2022:41). Taking into consideration these different elements outlined by the General Chapter in my reflection on prophetic witness, I would like to take humility as a point of departure of my understanding of prophetic witness. However, this reflection, at times, will not make a distinction between candidates and confreres as the elements above concern everyone.

Humility

Catherine Cornille (2008:11) underscores that humility is central to Christian Spirituality. It is seen as the path to the ultimate experience of God, as well as an expression of that experience. I would think any missionary life not grounded in an authentic attitude

of humility is neither prophetic nor missionary. Humility is a condition for prophetic witness. St. Bernard (1929:11) defines humility as a virtue that enables us to see ourselves in our true colours and thereby discover our worthlessness, our limitedness. In the context of our mission, it is with humility that we can realize that our mission totally depends on our listening to God. For Cornille (2008:14), it's "the radical and total worthlessness of a human person, not in comparison with any worldly or human agency, but in an absolute sense, or in relation to God." In humility, we can discern God's mission and will for our Society of the Missionaries of Africa and be prophetic witnesses. But it should be noted that writing about 'prophetic witness' or even including it in our vision for the next six years as a congregation is one thing, but being one (being a witness) is another thing. Without humility, we cannot discern God's will, read the signs of our time, or even see how to live our charism in today's context.



Christ's self-emptying (Ph 2:7-8) exemplifies an attitude needed in our formation and mission. Consequently, both initial formation and ongoing formation must emphasize humility following the example of Jesus. It cannot be denied that the problems of entitlements and attitudes of clericalism coupled with the problem of 'groupism' are clear signs of a lack of humility, which is a resistance to prophetic witness and resistance to God's Spirit. It may lead to the love of power, disobedience, closing oneself in one's comfort zone, a superiority complex, and spiritual self-sufficiency. As much as humility is important in formation, we confreres should be examples to candidates. Working in formation

for a few years, it is interesting to hear and see how our candidates are marked by different confreres they have met, either positively or negatively. In this sense, I would underline that the authenticity of the prophetic witness of confreres will also impact the authenticity of the prophetic witness of candidates. We must invite and encourage every confrere to integrate Christ's humility in our mission and community relationships.

Formation in view of prophetic witness

Therefore, in my experience, what I understand by formation in view of prophetic witness, is a transformative formation - a total listening to God's Spirit leading



our Society to the action of God (the Kairos) through our missionary endeavours. Paul VI, talking about the Church, underlined that striving to proclaim the Gospel to all people has had the single aim of fulfilling her duty of being the messenger of the Good News of Jesus Christ - the Good News proclaimed through two fundamental commands: "Put on the new self" and "Be reconciled to God" (EN 2). Proclaiming the Good News in words or by our lives, or to be 'nothing but apostles' as our founder puts it, invites us to self-emptying of the old self and put on the new self that listens to God and is in perpetual reconciliation with God and perpetual transformation so as to be to one another and people what we are with God.

What has been said may sound speculative and maybe even romantic. However, the words of Paul VI, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (EN 41), seems to be still relevant today. There is a need to emphasize the prophetic witness toward oneself and others. Thus, this witness must be existential, permeating our lives, and underpinning the coherence of what we

live and what we preach or say to the people or to one another. Mission is more than telling people that God loves them; in most cases, they know or have heard it several times. What more are we doing to be prophetic witnesses? How is it translated into our daily lives? Or are we only teachers? In this perspective, formation must pay particular attention to the difference between being witnesses and teachers of religion or morals. Forming our candidates to be witnesses and not only teachers and if they are teachers it is because they are witnesses is imperative if prophetic witness must be meaningful within the Society.

Pope Francis asserts that it is true that mission demands great generosity on our part (EG 12). I would further say that prophetic witness demands a lot of humility. This enables us to move "from a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry" (EG 15). A shift from a pastoral ministry of maintenance to a prophetic witness. Thus, formation should stress prophetic witnessing communities or evangelizing communities, as Pope Francis (EG 24) states further, communities that get involved by word and deed in people's daily



lives, that bridge distances, that are willing to abase themselves if necessary, and that embrace human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Take on the “smell of the sheep.”

Finally, I would conclude that formation in view of the prophetic witness must express radical humility going beyond our selfish desires and ambitions that too often condition our choices and our availability in mission. I think that if formation must be prophetic witness-centred, it must be humility-centred. On another note, as Merivale Formation House, in our commitments as a community, it is encouraging to hear how people appreciate the simplicity and unity of our candidates at the institute and areas of apostolates.

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Jones Kawisha



Life-giving witnesses to God's love



The Spiritual year community in Kasama, Zambia, on the occasion of the novices taking of the habit with families and friends

In my experience, I understand formation in view of prophetic witness as a personal witness to the person of Christ in my encounter with people and living out my faith in Jesus. Jesus is the prophet and witness. I testify to his active presence and love in my own life. I believe that formation in view of a prophetic witness is preparing oneself to be a prophet of the present moment and be an effective witness to Jesus Christ.

Formation is the time of fostering a healthy relationship with the person of Christ who called me to be his witness to his eternal presence in my life and the lives of others. Since missionary formation is lifelong, the life lived under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit is prophetic and gives witness to the presence of God. Initial and Ongoing Formation are aimed at making me a prophet who listens to God with one ear and listens to people and his creation with the other ear. In doing so, I become a life-giving witness to God's love

My attitude towards formation in view of prophetic witness is one of gratitude and hope. The gratitude goes to God and the Society for making the formation process a time of encounter. The hope is to live the vision of being a true prophet and witness to the living God in every circumstance of life. I am a prophet and witness to a changing world by changing



Chikando Dematerial, Daniel Bizimana, Gabriel Mwangi Kimondo, Simeon Kalore, Cyprian Lulu, Etienne Duut and Didache Sane

my attitudes towards gratefulness and being an apostle and nothing but an apostle. My gratitude and hopes are also based on the fact that my vocation itself is a prophetic witness when lived with commitment and faithfulness to the Oath.

Prophets are people of prayer who take spiritual life seriously. Prophetic witness is possible when one has experienced God's love in his own life to share with others through ecumenism, dialogue, primary evangelization, works of justice and peace and integrity of creation. Formation in view of prophetic witness helps one to interpret the signs of the time in the light of the Gospel with the Spirit of discernment. The mission of prophetic witness is the mission of Christ entrusted to the Church.

I carry out this mission with gratitude, hope and faith in the one who has entrusted me.

What are the signs of it?

The signs of formation in view of prophetic witness are living our ministry with the spirit of discernment. The spirit of missionary discernment is living in the present moment, responding to the current needs by reading the signs of our time and also continuing the missionary charism that we have received from the foundation of the Society. In the Initial Formation, the candidates are aware of the priorities of the Society's mission and in Ongoing Formation, confreres are trained for different ministries. This is a sign that we are well prepared to respond to the needs of our time.



Moreover, prophetic witness is also lived in our togetherness as a community. We are sent to witness as a community. Our unity, caring for and accompanying one another in difficulties, commitment to mission, learning the language and knowing the culture of people, being present in the peripheries of the society, working with migrants, care for creation, parish ministry and all other activities done by the Society indicate that formation in view of prophetic witness is lived daily. Opening the Society to the new realities in Africa and in the African world is a clear sign of prophetic witness. The Society is always alert to the “burning bush” around to see and judge what action to take.

My own experience

Through the ministry of formation activities in which I am involved, I experience the dynamic of formation in view of prophetic witness in my daily commitment. This mission was entrusted to me by the Society. Being faithful to the mission and ministry of accompanying young people, living as a witnessing community, taking part in the parish activities and celebrating Eucharist in the religious communities is a sign of being a prophet and witness. Living in an international community is prophetic by itself. In our 2022-2023 intake of novices and formators, we were 20 people from 15 different nationalities and 3 continents.



Simeon Kalore visiting the novices during their pastoral immersion experience



To be an effective prophet and witness I challenge myself every day to be a better missionary with a renewed zeal for mission, a new vigour for the apostolate drawing life from Jesus Christ and collaborating with others willingly.

Though my formation activities do not give me a lot of opportunities to encounter people outside the community, whenever I meet Christians or non-Catholics, they talk well about the Missionaries of Africa who worked in Kasama Archdiocese and Zambia in general. They appreciate their contribution. This challenges me; since in me and other young missionaries, people see the many missionaries who lived and worked in Zambia with great faith and zeal. There is a great expectation that all the missionaries have the same fire and passion for mission. Our formation in view of prophetic witness must prepare us to hand on this fire, the Good News of Jesus with the love and zeal of our ancestors. We seem to lack this ardent zeal and fire in personnel.

Areas to be developed

Areas to develop: Our formation system should continue to reconnect us to our roots; that is the missionary aspiration of our founder and

the present realities of our world. To become better prophets and witnesses, we should be faithful to our Oath and evangelical counsels. Formation should prepare us for a more committed spiritual life of prayer, apostolate and fraternity. Formation should continue to encourage us to take seriously integrity in ministry to be authentic witnesses to the Gospel we preach. Formation should be aimed at training missionaries for pastoral ministry, self-renewal, and the use of social media for evangelizing purposes. Formation in view of prophetic witness should prepare us for a responsible living of financial and material aspects of the Society, encouraging transparency and solidarity.



Simeon Kalore



Initial Formation and prophetic witness: current values

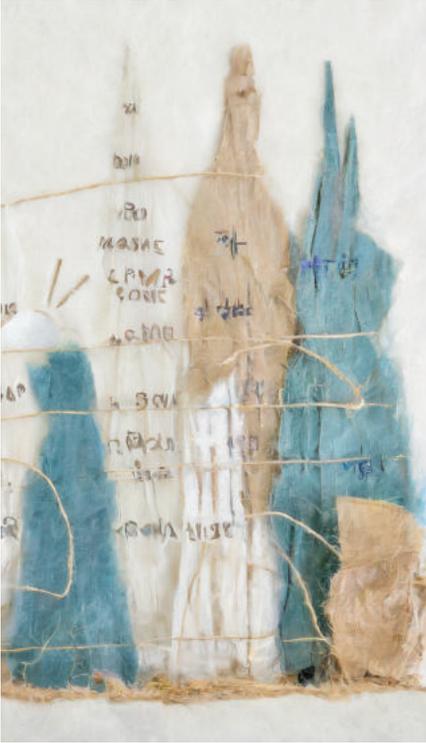


The theme of mission as prophetic witness became central since our last Chapter. Since the Chapter provides us with guidelines for the coming years, Initial Formation must take this into account. How do we prepare our candidates to be true witnesses? It would be dangerous to focus solely on the future, looking for new ways to make our mission and formation more prophetic when, in many ways, they already are. We can rely on our experience, starting from what we live, both for the mission and for preparing the candidates. So, we are not starting from scratch; we have a wealth of experience to draw on. Here are a

few characteristics of our charism to which Initial Formation tries to remain faithful.

Interculturality

There is one vital point and prophetic sign that we usually experience without paying particular attention to it because it is our everyday reality. We don't realise the sign we are giving, but which people outside see. Different people from different countries and cultures living under the same roof is a living sermon that questions and challenges this world where conflicts of all kinds reign. According to the testimony of a confrere, a ques-



tion was put to the members of their community in Ouargla, a town plagued by internal strife: how do you manage to live as brothers, all together, when we can't?

A spirit of simplicity

A second characteristic we experience daily is a genuine spirit of simplicity among us, with few privileges associated with status. Of course, a formator is not a candidate, and a candidate is not a formator! Nevertheless, simplicity is the link between formators and

candidates, significantly impacting the relationship quality between candidates and formators. This simplicity plays a part in our relationship with the people we are sent to. The confrères go into the villages and share the food of the people. A confrère is a confrère, whatever his title. He is a confrere before he is white or black before he is a priest or a brother. The formators of the spiritual year dip their hands in dishwater just like the novices.

Learning languages

In connection with the simplicity of relationships, we give a third prophetic sign, which is accepted and desired by the candidates in formation: the learning of languages. This has been a priority right from the start. Our confrères became experts in the local language, sometimes even knowing it better than the people themselves. This is a prophetic sign that we don't pay much attention to anymore because it is natural to us. We learn the language wherever we go. Learning the language is a sign of respect for others. I try to learn your language; I don't ask you to learn mine. A good knowledge of the language brings us closer to people.



Goods at the service of mission

Yet another sign is our approach to material goods. Technically, we are not religious because we do not take a vow of poverty. Our approach to poverty has unique characteristics. Firstly, everything is for the apostolate. Resources are at the service of the mission. Secondly, a certain resourcefulness and a sense of shared responsibility are required. Each confrere feels responsible for the common good and for finding something for the functioning of the community and the apostolate because often the Society or the bursars do not have the means. Finally, when the confrere had little money and knew that the Society had little, he knew he had to be thrifty. No question of waste! This approach, typical of our Society, can be challenging to respect during Initial Formation. There is a great danger ahead of us: continuing to have personal money while behaving like a religious with a vow of poverty. Religious should not worry about where their resources come from: they have the congregation and the treasurers, confreres responsible for generating income and finding benefactors. There is a danger if we no longer feel concerned about the Society's common good and

financial issues. We need to nurture a spirit of creativity in candidates during their initial formation to meet the financial needs of their future mission.

Accepting the reality of the world

Another characteristic of being a missionary is realism. When you live in a rural parish with a problem, there's no point in pretending that the problem doesn't exist. You look at it and try to find a solution. The missionary is a realist and should be. We encourage our candidates to be realistic about themselves by getting to know themselves better and presenting the life that awaits them in as unidealised a way as possible. Paying attention to the reality around us is a way of listening to God and obeying him because he speaks to us in our reality. He wants us to live in this world as it is and not in some imaginary world where sexual abuse and ecological and financial crises do not exist but where the General Council has rejected the budget. Rejection of reality is the rejection of God. Good discernment can only be made with a realistic view of life and faith. Spiritual exercises serve to incarnate faith in this sometimes inconvenient reality.



Obedience

This leads us to a final point: obedience. Lavignerie wanted our Society to be characterised by the obedience of its members. The cultural or traditional approach to authority easily confuses the will of the person in authority with the will of God. The two are seen as equivalent when they are not. It is a top-down approach between those who decide and those who obey. While in some parts of the Church, this cultural approach seems to be well accepted as evangelical, our Society has found a good balance between dialogue and authority. Superiors seek God's will, what God expects of the Society. Ultimately, it is to God that we must all obey. Our approach to obedience is active and requires candidates to give their points of view and express their expectations. Of course, there is the danger that they may believe their requests will always be met and rebel if they are not. However, our Society

does have a healthy and positive approach to the concepts of obedience, combining respect for authority and fraternity without dissociating the two.

We must, of course, ensure that these values are not lost, but the few points mentioned show a truly prophetic dimension in what we are already experiencing and our approach to initial formation. We must not build from scratch but continue on the foundations laid over the years.



Jean Michel Laurent



Compass for a prophetic witness throughout life



One morning, I was in the Denis Hurley Library at Saint Joseph's Theological Institute – Cedara, South Africa, looking for an article in the journals and magazines section. The librarians were busy with their usual activities. Silence reigned. Suddenly, I overheard a student declaring that if he finished his studies and was ordained a priest, the only thing he would read would be a local newspaper. He said he was tired of doing homework and writing essays. The librarians laughed. When he realised I was also in the library, he came over to say hello and told me he

was joking. I encouraged and praised him for his willingness to update himself by reading a locally published newspaper. In so doing, I said that his context would, in the spirit of *aggiornamento*, inform and enrich his *ideo-theological* orientation. The student smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

In the spirit of the 29th General Chapter, the following lines aim to elucidate elements that I hope can stimulate conversation and critical reflection on our formation programme. I suppose the Capitulants had in mind that our efforts to train future missionaries must be shaped and enriched with prophetic “spices”. In other words, they continued to echo the inspiration of our Founder who, in his instructions to missionaries strikingly and persuasively wrote: ‘Be Apostles, nothing but Apostles’ (cf. I no 41). This article is limited to Initial Formation, and in particular the Fourth Phase, a context with which, in a way, I have acquired a certain familiarity.

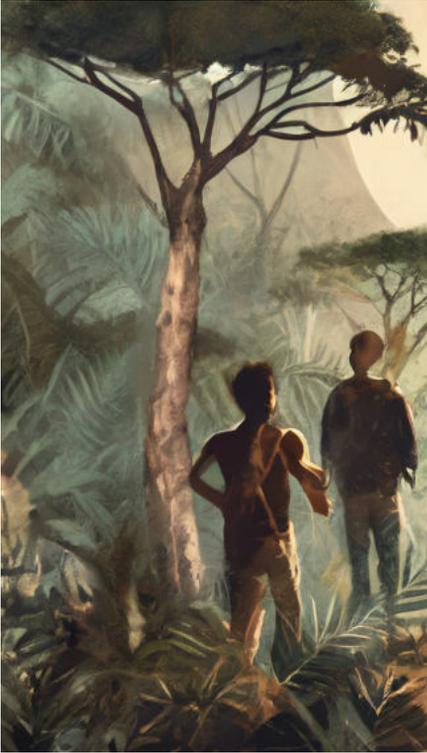


Called, Commissioned and Entrusted with Mission

By nature of his/her vocation, a prophet is someone who is set apart and divinely chosen to speak before others on behalf of God. The prophetic voice does not exist in a vacuum; it always arises in response to a situation that needs to be put right, challenged and adjusted. Often, prophets are sent not only “to uproot and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow,” but also “to build and to plant”



(Jer 1:10). They are aware of their calling and recognise that the prophecies they utter come from God. This is why they introduce the prophetic word with a special formula such as: “Thus says the Lord” (Amos 1:3) and “The word of the Lord came to me saying” (Jer 1:4). God’s ‘word’ compels them to speak it: “Lord Yahweh has spoken: who will not prophesy?” (Amos 3:8). Since their mission comes from God, their vocation too must come from him and they must be sent by him. We can therefore speak of a prophetic vocation in the triple sense of a call, a commission and a mission. The three-fold meaning is found both in oral prophets like Abraham (Gen 12:1) and Moses (Exod 3:4-10) and in writing prophets like Amos (Am 7:14-15), Isaiah (Is 6:8-10) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-10). The call of the Twelve Apostles (Mk 3:14-15) is also based on the triple sense mentioned above. And in Acts 26:16 we read: “I have appeared to you, to appoint you to serve and bear witness.” Suffering is another element that characterises the prophetic vocation. True prophets are often misunderstood, persecuted and rejected by religious and political authorities (Amos 7:10-17) and sometimes by their own people (Jer 18:18-23; Lk 4:24).



Pastoral experience as fertile ground for theological formation

One of the elements of our formation programme that I always cherish is the inclusion of a two-year period of apostolic training which allows candidates to put into practice the spiritual values acquired during the Spiritual Year. Candidates have the chance to benefit from such an opportunity before beginning their theological studies. They come to theology with a fruitful pastoral experience

and questions that help them relate to what is happening in the classroom. The period of apostolic training offers candidates a space for discovery and critical curiosity. It also helps them grow in their missionary vocation and enriches them with insight into what it means to be a missionary and a prophet in today's African world.

In the course of their sharing, commonly known as the Debriefing of Stage, it is possible to see how some communities have tried their best to support and participate in the formation of stagiaires. For example, a candidate may recount how his community thanked him at the end of the Stage for the various initiatives he had taken, and how his presence helped them to come together to pray. The same candidate could also appreciate the good pastoral plan prepared by his community and the way in which it encourages the laity to participate in the various activities of the parish. A stagiaire who arrives at a theological centre with such a positive experience is more likely to commit himself fully to his studies, because he already knows what awaits him at the end of his initial formation. I still remember very well another candidate who, a few years ago, said that the members



of his community disappointed him because they hardly prayed together as a community. Every time he tried to bring it to their attention, he was told that he knew where the chapel was and that he did not need to wait for them. This kind of environment calls into question some of our basic principles of community life (cf. C & L, 30-31). Prayer nourishes our missionary vocation, enlightens our prophetic voice and prepares us for action.

“Submarine” and “Beat the system” Mentality

During a morning of reflection at Saint Joseph’s Theological Institute on the theme of Integrity in Ministry, the keynote speaker exposed us to various challenges and realities concerning our ministry today. He placed great emphasis on fidelity to our vocation as a sign of Christian witness among the people of God. He warned against the ‘submarine’ and ‘beat the system’ mentalities that an individual is tempted to employ to achieve his goal. With such a mentality it is only when the candidate has reached ordination that his real self emerges. Such mindsets, he said, do not make the church exist as a sign of hope. During group discussions, in the group I was fa-

ilitating, one student asked: What about you, formators, who also go submarine, where is your witness? His question provoked laughter, but the message was delivered. I think we have a very good formation programme designed to help formators and candidates live as a family in a spirit of ‘openness, simplicity and proximity.’ Of course, the result is not always one hundred per cent successful, but on the whole it is very good. I have met confreres who have asked me: Were you a formator of so-and-so? Didn’t you notice any dubious elements in them? Such questions express their disappointment. I believe that the success of missionary formation depends on the personal convictions and inner freedom of each candidate. It is also true, I think, that candidates in formation know each other better than any formator. How, then, can candidates be fully involved in the formation programme and play a prophetic role in helping one another to discern authentically?

Maturity, Variety and Quality of the Candidates

The Capitulants, after appreciating “the variety and quality of the candidates,” also seemed to have noticed that “there is a lack



of rigour in applying the *Vademecum*, in the selection and follow-up of candidates as well as in evaluations and psychological reports by some animators and formators.” There is also “a spirit of entitlement,” “misunderstanding of freedom,” “lack of availability for certain commitments” as well as emerging attitudes of “clericalism” (29th General Chapter, Capitular Acts, pp. 41-43). The Society of Missionaries of Africa does not exist as an island; it belongs to the world and it is in the world that it carries out its commitments. We live in a world where the negative and positive effects of secularism, post-modernism and globalisation are evident. Traditional Christian

families are not immune from these phenomena. Divorces, and children being raised by single parents or grandparents are becoming the norm. The high unemployment rate and the loss of hope among young people is a reality that we cannot dismiss. Many young people are frustrated and faced with all sorts of addictions. But it is also there that we find the seeds of missionary vocation. How are we prepared to address these contexts in our initial formation programmes? Many university graduates are looking for white-collar job opportunities, and not jobs which require the use of physical energy. Thus, a positive attitude towards manual work, demonstrated by both formators and





candidates, can serve as a concrete gesture of prophetic witness to young graduates who tend to despise it. As missionaries we are not after Roman-collar job opportunities but rather service and self-sacrifice. Clericalism creates false hopes and unrealistic expectations and it compromises our free choice of a simple lifestyle. In most independent African countries, there is a widespread tendency to foster a victim mentality where almost all economic difficulties are attributed to our dark past of slavery and colonialism. This seems to justify our continuous going cap in hand to developed countries to beg. What is our responsibility and how can we exercise it prophetically and concretely in the face of economic poverty and political crisis in Africa? Would it be completely wrong to associate the spirit of entitlement with the slogan of victim mentality or with the Roman-collar-job mentality?

Conclusion

I recall my conversation with the student in the library. He felt overwhelmed by work and hoped to get rid of it as soon as possible. However, he did not detach the notion of *aggiornamento* from his reasoning. We cherish his determination to update himself by reading locally published material. Prophetic witness bears fruit when prophets never tire of reading the signs of the times and of acting accordingly. Their actions must also be in conformity with their words. As people of unconditional hope, missionaries will continue to be considered the conscience of society, and their integrity will serve as a compass for prophetic witness throughout their lives.



Quinbert Salvius Kinunda

Echoes from the meeting of confreres in the second term of mission

Kigali - Rwanda



General context

From 9 to 30 July, the Lavigerie Mission Centre (CML) in Kigali hosted the so called second-term of mission session for missionary confreres from Africa. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, this session, initially scheduled for 2020, had already been postponed more than once. Twenty confreres were invited to the meeting. However, five of them were unable to attend for various reasons.

The participants were: Ambrosio Francisco from Mexico, Silimi Christophe from the DRC, Nyengere Rémi from Malawi, Itungabose Benjamin from Burundi, Choma Adam from Poland, Cirimwami Gaspard from the DRC, Ciza Lamec from Burundi, Sokpo Gauthier from Togo, Mtei George from Tanzania, Imani Emmanuel from the DRC, Kaboré Léon from Burkina Faso, Kambale Gratien Mpendano from the DRC, and Ouedraogo Michel, Bouda Bertin and Kondemodré Albert from Burkina



Faso. We were delighted to be accompanied by Soma Olivier and Efiyo Gilles as session coordinators. In addition to the coordinators, we also benefited from the contributions of John Itaru, our General Bursar, Dave Sullivan, Brother Fabien Bulaimu, Madame Chantal Mudahogora and Abbé Donatien, who helped us to go into greater depth on topics within their remit.

We began our meeting in an atmosphere of meditation and prayer. Then, in a relaxed and fraternal atmosphere, we revisited and shared together our vocational, community, pastoral and missionary experiences. We also had time to explore certain themes in greater depth, such as the spiritual life in today's

context, community life and its dynamics, emotional life, stress management, addictions, Justice and Peace in the Rwandan context, finances within our Society, and so on. These themes were addressed by fellow members and other resource persons. Finally, there were opportunities for relaxation, outings and visits.

Highlights of the session :

- *Sharing ideas.*

The first highlight of our session was devoted to sharing our experiences as Missionaries of Africa. We shared our vocational journey and our current ministry. We shared our sorrows and joys, our songs



Courtesy visit to the Archbishop of Kigali, His Eminence Antoine Cardinal Kambanda



and our hope. We listened to each other with compassion and empathy. It was a powerful moment of listening to each other. Given that sharing touches the whole person and many dimensions of his or her life, the importance of confidentiality was emphasised.

The second important moment was devoted to the various resource persons who enriched us with their communications. Almost all the presentations focused on the integral life of the missionary. The dynamics of community life were at the heart of the first presentation. It generated a great deal of interaction among the participants. Even if there is no such thing as a perfect community, everyone has their share of

responsibility for making the community a place where confreres flourish. In a community where there is cohesion, the members live happily, and this also has a positive impact on the ministry.

Other talks on emotional maturity, stress management and prevention of overwork were a real eye-opener and of great interest to us. We realised how important it is to listen to our bodies and recognise the warning signs of stress and depression so that we can prevent them. To do this, we need to know how to take time out, be well organised, take joint responsibility with other employees and give up certain non-essential tasks. We were also made aware of the



Visit to the Gisozi genocide memorial site, Rwanda



various types of addiction and the importance of taking care of our mental health. The talk of mission as prophetic witness and the discussions around this theme were also enriching.

- Visits and outings.

We made a courtesy visit to the Archbishop of Kigali, His Eminence Antoine Cardinal Kambanda. He gave us a warm welcome. He also offered us his condolences following the death of our colleague, Cardinal Richard Baawobr. After asking for news from our respective mission areas, he spoke to us about the Church of Rwanda in general and that of the archdiocese of Kigali in particular. In the end, he gave us his paternal blessing.

In a spirit of prayer, we went to the Gisozi genocide memorial site to pay our respects. We prayed for lasting peace, for the repose of souls, and for this odious history never to be repeated. Never again!

We were delighted to go on a missionary outing to the parish of

Saint-Pierre in Cyahafi and to the diocese of Nyundo to take part in the ordination of one of our Rwandan confreres. In addition to the recreational evenings, we went on a relaxing outing to Rwesero on the shores of Lake Muhazi.

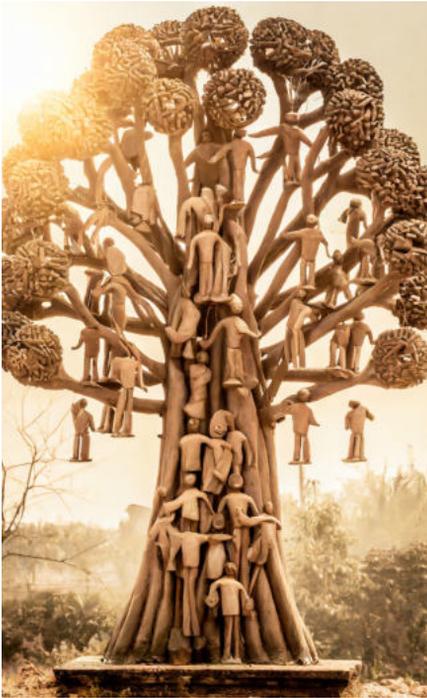
All in all, we were satisfied with the Kigali session. It was a time of reunion, of fraternal sharing, of mutual support, recharging our batteries, reviewing our way of being and doing things, and of encouragement to move forward in our mission. Each of us left with an open mind and heart, full of hope.



Gratien Kambale et
Léon Kaboré

I am because we are :

Ujamaa as an expression of ubuntu - synod and Synodality



Ubuntu is an African philosophy that places emphasis on “being human through other people. I, being human, can’t be without the other!” This has been succinctly reflected in the phrase that explains the essence of Ubuntu: “I am because we all are” This implies that

to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them. Indeed, this also implies that if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the latter. Is this not expressing the celebration of Synod and Synodality as we journey together as a People of God created in His image and likeness? This matches well with the philosophy of Ubuntu - a family spirit!

Our Constitutions and Laws stipulate very clearly that, “By family spirit that exists among its members, the Society wants each community and itself as a whole to be a sign of unity. To live the ideal proposed by Christ - ‘that they be one as we are one’ (Jn. 17:11) - is already an expression of the Kingdom. A living apostolic community is in itself a witness”



(no. 36). Lavigerie himself was uncompromisingly blunt on this as he stated, “I declare that I will not keep a single one of you who does not surround with the same love all the members of the Society, regardless of which nation they belong” (I n°105, p. 260).

Thus, ‘I am in the community because we are!’ Ubuntu or Ujamaa at its core!

Julius Kambarage Nyerere expounded and explicated Ubuntu as a concept expressed in its reality in the African context as Ujamaa, which is a form of socialism (Tanzanian Socialism) as “an attitude of mind ... which is needed to en-

sure that the people care for each other’s welfare.” This is the ‘journeying together’ as brothers and sisters of the same ‘Father’. This is the attitude of “brother-hood” or “family-hood” or “African-ness.” Nyerere considered that there is a very close link between caring for one another and the attitude of brother-hood or family-hood. For him, care for one another can only be guaranteed if people view each other as brothers and sisters or as members of the same family. Thus, the basis of Ubuntu (African Socialism or African-ness), offers an understanding of Ujamaa. And of course, as a Church today we are called to follow the way of Syn-





odality as we are all in the same boat - the Church - the way of Christ. Synod on Synodality urges us all to “listen to one another in order to hear what God is saying to all of us” for the sake of fraternal brotherhood and sisterhood making a common denominator as God’s children.

Pope Francis explains all this as ‘fraternity’. For him, “Fraternity is one of the fundamental and universal values that ought to undergird relationships between peoples, so that the suffering or disadvantaged do not feel excluded and forgotten, but accepted and supported as part of the one human family ... We all live under the same heaven and, in the name of God, we who are his creatures must acknowledge that we are brothers and sisters. As believers from different religious traditions, we have a role to play” (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/250293/pope-francis-respond-to-conflict-with-human-fraternity>).

The emphasis that Nyerere placed on the sense of brotherhood does not mean that socialist institutions and organisations are irrelevant, rather it implies that “without correct attitudes, institutions can be subverted from their true pur-

pose.” Thus, although to Nyerere socialist institutions and organisations were important, they could not by themselves lead to the attainment of a true purpose of socialism, which is the well-being of all people, unless the people in those institutions and organisations are infused with the spirit of brotherhood and actually care for one another. To Nyerere, therefore, in the individual, as in the society, it is an attitude of mind which distinguishes the socialist from the non-socialist.

In other words, it is the attitude of family-hood (in Chichewa, in Malawi, they call it Ubale) which is the litmus test and the condition sine qua non, for the existence of Ujamaa. This is Ubuntu at its core: ‘I am because We are!’ There is no negation on this! It is unfortunate that individualism, greedy and the sense of ‘I, Me, and Myself’ dismantle the whole purpose of ‘I am because We are!’ That defeats the purpose of journeying together with care and love. It negates the purpose of Synod on Synodality; it negates the philosophy of Ubuntu with all its richness of the sense of togetherness and support for one another that embraces fraternity in solidarity.



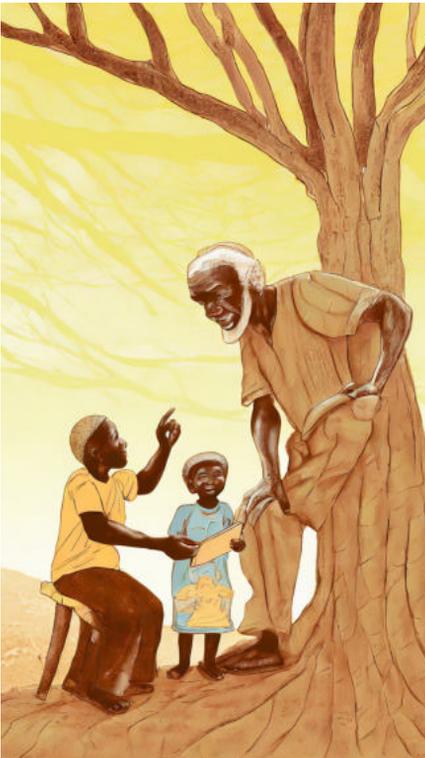
According to Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the word Ujamaa was chosen for special reasons. “First, it is an African word, and thus, emphasizes the African-ness of the policies we intend to follow. Second, its literal meaning is ‘familyhood’, so that it brings to the mind of our people the idea of mutual involvement in the family, as we know it. By the use of the word Ujamaa, therefore, we state that for us socialism involves building on the foundation of our past, and building also to our own design.

We are not importing a foreign ideology or trying to smother our distinct social patterns with it” (Julius K. Nyerere, Freedom and Socialism).

Synod on Synodality, on its part, does not only invite but also involves each and every member of the family or community or Society of Apostolic Life like ours to participate fully in its important safari that we have put our feet on as a Church, the family of God.

Nyerere was astute enough to concede that, “socialism is international; its ideas and beliefs relate to human beings in society, not just to a Tanzanian in Tanzania, or an African in Africa”. But he emphasised that the international character of socialism did not mean, and ought not to mean, that all societies aspiring to build socialism would and should follow one single pattern of development. In other words, Ubuntu goes far beyond Tanzania as expressed in the Ujamaa system. Synod in Synodality embraces all the members of the Church in their entirety.

In Malawi, the ‘Warm Heart of Africa’, like in many other African countries, the reality of Ubuntu or Ujamaa or Ubale is expressed or concretised in the day-to-day life





without compromise both in joyous and sad/sorrowful situations. For instance, new life - birth of a new baby - is celebrated together as a family. Marriage is not a couple's business alone, but rather family or community business. Sickness or death are not isolated packages meant to be carried out by the concerned individuals, they are handled as such by the families or communities. No one is left behind or alone in such matters. The reality of "I am because We are" is fully concretised in such situations. A simple example is that if one drives or rides, and along the way happens to meet people mourning or going to the manda (graveyard), he/she has to slow down or even stop for the mourners to pass. This is not only a sign or gesture of respect but also solidarity in its concrete terms. This speaks volumes in terms of the essence of Ubuntu!

All in all, it is true and common sense that, "If I walk beside you, we will find the right path together." "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

"United we stand, alone we fall."
 "United we stand, together we win!
 Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much!" God has created us not as icebergs, but rather as relational beings. "I am because We Are"; hence, we are to journey together as brothers and sisters! And this is also an expression of Easter celebration as a resurrected people beyond the tomb of selfishness, greed and individualism! It is Lavigerie's spirituality to be emulated uncompromisingly as a 50/50 win parameter of our Society!



James Ngahy



Young people's workshop on Mission before the Synod 2023



To mark the beginning of the Synod on Synodality Assembly of the 4th of October 2023, the Vatican organised several activities in Rome. On the 30th of September 2023, there were over twenty (20) workshops organised in different places in Rome on various topics and an Ecumenical Prayer Virgil at Saint Peter's Square.

These workshops brought together young people from all over the world. I participated in the workshop held at the Trinità dei Monti, which had Mission as its theme. It was a great pleasure to

be welcomed by some members of the Coordinating Team of the "Together Gathering of God's People" group. In the introduction given at the beginning of the Workshop, Mission was defined in general terms before delving into what it entails, especially for young people today.

Rev. Elijah M. BROWN, the General Secretary and CEO of Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and I were invited to share our experiences in Mission. I found this to be an excellent initiative because it was really an ecumenical encounter in which we shared our life not only as Missionaries but also as Christians looking forward to participating more in God's Mission. It was a good witness of God's love and being open to one another as we shared our missionary experiences. For sure, it was a deep and enriching experience.

I consider this an excellent platform to share with young people from various countries and cultures



who wish to serve God in multiple ways. Many of them expressed the desire to offer themselves as Missionary Volunteers in their particular churches despite the doubts and fears that they experience continuously. For some, it was the right occasion to share their opinions so that together, we can search for better solutions to respond to God's Mission and the challenges it presents in our present World.



These workshops brought together young people from all over the world

Some questions that were asked during the workshop

As a young Catholic Missionary Priest, I lived this great moment of sharing and encounter with other Christians with a positive attitude and much hope for the future. For example, it was so encouraging to hear various questions that were asked during the workshop. Here are some selected questions which I paraphrased:

“How can we respond to the message of the so called “prosperity gospel?”

“Why is it that often we notice that the churches are empty, and yet some World Youth Gatherings such as the WYD many young people attend? How do we explain this?”

“Sometimes I feel that I’m so young and unexperienced and somehow limited in the field of Mission. What advise would you give me about this?”

“In my Country Egypt, I experience rejection. How can I face it as a Christian?”

“Social Media is attracting a lot of young people, as Missionaries, how do we ap-



proach this challenging reality?”

“How can I develop a personal relationship with God?”

“What are some ways to deal with “seasons of dryness” in one’s life of prayer?”

“How can we manage to be “radical christians” and at the same time deal with accessibility?”

“What would you say about Mission and Conversion?”

We tried to respond together to the above questions based on our experiences. For instance, in my case it was important to respond according to my missionary ex-

perience, and explain more on the official teaching of the Church on certain topics. It is important to note that questions such as these are so helpful as we continue participating in God’s Mission. They play an essential role as an “eye-opener” so as to help us discover the new horizons of Mission and how to be ready to read and interpret the “signs of the time” in our world full of challenges today. They give us more energy to move on with God’s Mission and to be attentive to what young people are going through in our World today. In short, it was a wonderful and extraordinary experience for me as a young Catholic Missionary Priest.



Humphrey Mukuka leading the workshop at Trinité des Monts on 30 September 2023



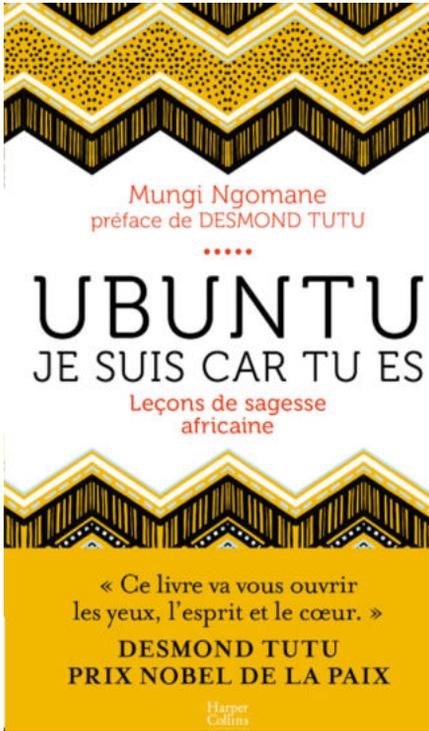
Some ways to overcome difficulties and challenges in Mission today

Looking at today's context in which a good number of difficulties and challenges affect the Mission either directly or indirectly, it is essential to respond contextually and be able to analyse and evaluate the situation. For instance, some of these difficulties and challenges are associated with religious pluralism, religious indifference, insecurity, the multiple ways of understanding and living the Christian faith inside Christianity, etc. Hence, what is vital in this case is to cultivate the passion and love for God's Mission. Always remember that it is "God's Mission" and not our Mission in the first place. As Pope John Paul II states: "The internal and external difficulties must not discourage us. What matters is, like in every aspect of Christian life, is the faithfulness that comes, that is from the certainty that we are not the

Protagonists of the Mission, but Jesus Christ and His Spirit" (RM 36). This encourages us to face today's reality with confidence and hope that God accompanies us as we continue serving Him. In addition, Pope Francis, at the Ecumenical Vigil Prayer that was held on the 30th of September 2023, invited us to learn to be silent in prayer so that we could let the Holy Spirit speak to us and guide us in accomplishing God's Mission.



Humphrey Mukuka



Mungi Ngomane, *Ubuntu. Je suis car tu es. Leçons de sagesse africaine*, preface by Desmond Tutu, translated from English (South Africa) by Chloé Royer, collection Développement personnel - Bien être n° 336, ISBN 979-10-339-1138-8, Harper Collins Poche, Paris, February 2022, 320 pages, 7.50 euro

Ubuntu comes from the Xhosa language and refers to a Southern African philosophy, the source of inspiration for Nobel Peace Prize winners Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, which advocates well-being and living well together. In 14 simple, key texts with concrete examples, the book helps us to understand in depth the values of

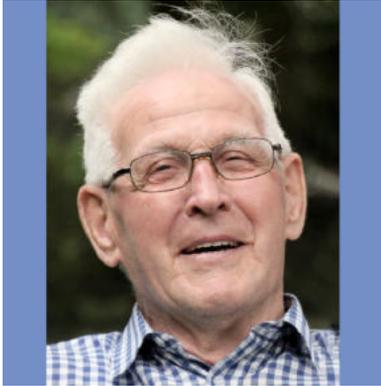
ubuntu, which are now spreading throughout Africa.

"In my community, the concept of *ubuntu* is one of the most fundamental aspects of a life of courage, compassion and connection to others", writes Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the preface. The author adds many other elements: dignity, respect, listening, kindness, humour and forgiveness. This book is a treasure to ponder at your leisure. It reveals values that many Africans often live.

Guy Theunis



Theo Boonen 1931-2023



Born in:	Hamont, Belgium le 19/07/1931
Sp. Year:	Varsenare, Belgium on 21/09/1952
Oath:	Heverlee, Belgium on 07/07/1956
Priesthood:	Heverlee, Belgium on 21/04/1957
Died at:	Hamont-Achel, Belgium on 07/09/2023

Our confrere Theo Boonen was born on 19 July 1931 in Hamont, in Limburg, Belgium. He belonged to a profoundly Christian peasant family with ten children, five boys and five girls. His father was the mayor of the commune where the family lived. Theo was baptised there on July 20th 1931. His first name was Theodorus Gerardus. He attended his primary school in Hamont, where he was confirmed on July 6th 1943.

He studied humanities at the minor seminary in Saint-Trond. He graduated with 70% in rhetoric, with a Greco-Latin major. At the minor seminary, Theo was a pillar

of the KSA movement, a youth movement in Flanders. The seminary rector admired his organisational skills, exemplary way of life, and commitment. Theo proudly wrote that he had 80 KSA members under his leadership at the seminary.

His request to join the Missionaries of Africa was accepted immediately. He reported to Boechout in September 1950. His philosophy studies were fine without problems. His novitiate at Varsenare was next. He received the habit on September 21st 1952. Upon completing his novitiate, Theo was appointed to Heverlee to study theology. He took his missionary oath on July 7th 1956, and was ordained by



Bishop Ogez on April 21st 1957. Theo spent a year studying philology at the University of Louvain before leaving for Africa. Following in his brother's footsteps, he was appointed to Burundi. He is followed by a sister who eventually becomes a White Sister. His brother Jan followed in his footsteps, becoming a diocesan priest and vicar general of the diocese of Hasselt.

In Burundi

He arrived in Burundi, in Rumonge, on September 9th 1958. His superiors soon realised he was at ease with farmers and ordinary people. The intellectuals and urban people were not the preferred audience for this peasant son of ours. Being a good guide and leader, Theo was soon appointed parish priest, first in Murago in 1962 and then in Rutovu in 1964.

In 1966, he went on leave with his family and did his great retreat at Villa Cavaletti. On his return, he became superior of Rumeza (1966-1974) and then of Martyazo (1974-1984). In 1981, he was appointed regional councillor.

The political situation in Burundi became difficult, and missionaries were granted permission to leave the country one after the other in 1984. Theo was expelled from "his" Burundi on April 25th 1984. It was a hard blow for him. A good rest with his family and a long session in Jerusalem put him back on his feet; he accepted a new appointment in a new country: Zaire. He arrived there on January 1st 1986, as interim superior of Cherano.

In the Congo

Once in Zaire, he began learning Mashi, the local language. This was followed by a long period during which he lived with or quite close to his brother Harry, who had also been expelled from Burundi. He made long walks in the mountains to visit the locals, especially the elderly. He also went on a bicycle whenever possible. Theo agreed to be the bursar of the communities where he lived in what is now Congo: Mubumbano



in 1987, Bumpeta in 1989, and Murhesa in 1999. He had by now left younger colleagues be superior parish priest.

His last appointment in the DRC was in Burhiba, near Bukavu, in 2004. There were many intellectuals and influential people there. But those weren't his cup of tea. What's more, he had to learn Swahili. And at his age! He took the challenge with courage and perseverance, although it was difficult.

In Belgium

He returned to Belgium on May 17th 2006. He felt he had given enough. He was happy to accept his appointment to Genk. He moved there on August 1st 2006 and remained there until the year he died. He served as chaplain at Heiderust, a nursing home for the elderly, from 2010 to 2018.

Gradually, this great walker began to have difficulty walking. But he never complained. At the beginning of 2023, his family came to take him to live the rest of his life close to his biological family. In the meantime, his white father, brother, and his sister, who was White Sister, had already gone to their eternal rest. Life was becoming difficult, and a place was found



for him in a nursing home, initially for a short period because there was no room for an extended stay. The whole family supported him. Eventually, a place was found to accommodate him for a more extended period. Unfortunately, Theo didn't enjoy it for long. He died slowly at the Saint-Jean-Berchmans home. His family members and a few confreres were there to visit him in his final days. Strengthened by the sacrament of the sick conferred on him by his brother priest, he died on the night of 6th and 7th September 2023.

Yvo Wellens



Yves Laforest 1943 - 2023



Born in:	Magog, Canada on 07/05/1943
Sp. Year:	St-Martin, Canada on 17/08/1963
Oath:	Eastview, Canada on 16/06/1967
Priesthood:	Magog, Canada on 15/06/1968
Died at:	Sherbrooke, Canada on 24/09/2023

In our Sherbrooke community, heir to the habits and customs of our house in Lennoxville, when a confrere dies, there is a prayer vigil in front of the coffin or funerary urn of the deceased. In addition to prayers for the dead, his mission and the family, we "remember him" by recalling a few stages in his life. Here is what Father Michel Carbonneau described as "the main milestones in Yves' missionary life".

The Life of Yves Laforest

Yves was born in Magog on 07 May 1943, the first of 4 children. He was the son of Roland Laforest

and Claire Tourigny, sister of Yves Tourigny, White Father, and Victoire Tourigny White Sister. Raised in a missionary-minded family, Yves attended primary and secondary school in his home town. He then spent four years at the minor seminary in Sherbrooke, where he also studied the two years of philosophy required to enter the White Fathers.

In 1963, Yves entered the novitiate at Saint-Martin, near Montreal (now Ville Laval). From 1964 to 1968, he studied theology at the scholasticate in Eastview (now Vanier, Ottawa). In 1967, he was ordained to the diaconate by the



future Cardinal Emmanuel Kiwanuka Nsubuga, Archbishop of Kampala, who was visiting Canada. On 15 June 1968, he was ordained to the priesthood in his home parish of Saint-Patrice de Magog by Bishop Louis-Joseph Cabana, White Father.

In Tanzania

In August 1968, Yves left for Africa, for Tanzania. Bishop James Holmes-Siedle of Kigoma sent him to Burundi to learn Kirundi, a language close to Kiha in the diocese of Kigoma. Around Easter 1969, the new bishop of Kigoma, Mgr Alphonse Daniel Nsabi, sent him to Kipalapala to learn about pastoral work.

For a few months in July 1969, Yves was appointed to the parish of Nyaronga. Yves left us memories of his early years in Tanzania: "It's a beautiful parish on the side of a mountain. There's a garden and fruit trees". Appointed to the parish of Makere in February 1970, Yves writes: "Makere is situated in the centre of the diocese. There are several outstations, not easy to reach, especially in the rainy season. Very close to our parish, there was a small lime factory which brought in some income for the parish and gave work to a few workers. This lime was very good for white-washing the walls of the churches and missions".

*God was working in my life.
He was always with me at the most difficult times.*

Yves Laforest





After his years of parish service in Nyaronga and Makere, Yves returned to Kipalapala to learn the 'new' national language of Tanzania, Swahili. In 1972, Yves was asked to teach maths and physics as well as 'religion' at the Ujiji junior seminary. He taught there until 1979. In the meantime, he took two holidays in Canada. Yves wrote of the seminary, located near Lake Tanganyika: "Our house had a large veranda with a magnificent view of the lake. In the evenings, my confreres and I could watch the fishermen's boats with their paraffin lamps attracting the fish. Very close to the parish, on the road leading to Lake Tanganyika, there is a monument to commemorate the 1871 meeting between the explorers Livingstone and Stanley.

In January 1979, Yves was sent as curate to Mulera and Kasumo, in grouped parishes: "In each parish and branch, there was a comfortable house where we spent a few days saying Mass, giving instructions to the people of the villages and training the catechists".

In July 1981, Yves was appointed "Diocesan Director of the Lay Apostolate" with residence in Kasulu, a town where there was a District Commissioner (a sub-pre-

fect), a post office and government offices. Yves' mission was to visit the parishes of the diocese, meet lay leaders and give them seminars and training retreats. Three of Yves' sisters visit him, and they tour the Serengeti and Lake Manyara national parks.

From September 1985 to June 1989, Yves did his "national service" in missionary animation in Ottawa. He visited schools in the region and led youth groups. During his years in Canada, his parents died. Yves wrote: "Providentially, I was in Canada for these painful events: a grace from the Lord".

In 1989, Yves was appointed parish priest of Kakonko, an old historic parish just on the border with Burundi. Six years later, in 1995, he became head of the Kipalapala language school. Until 1999. Which included the session - retreat in Jerusalem, Yves took a sabbatical year in Canada. In October 2000, Yves was appointed vicar at Manzese, near Dar es Salaam. There, he built a carpentry school and faced all the administrative and personal challenges that went with running it. He remained there until his final return to Canada in 2011, a little tired and with advanced deafness.



In Canada

From 2011 until his death, Yves lived in Sherbrooke, a few kilometres from his sisters, first in our house in Lennoxville and, from 2020, at the Terrasse Bowen residence of the Lokia group, which welcomes priests and nuns as well as lay people. In 2023, Yves was hospitalised in cardiology at the Centre Universitaire de l'Université de Sherbrooke. During surgery, his heart was so weak that the medical team was unable to keep him alive. He died there on Sunday, 24 September 2023, aged 80 years and four months.

In the notes in which he sums up his life, Yves tells us: "What always amazed me about my work in Africa was how the Lord put in my way confreres or people who helped me in the parishes where I worked. They helped me to see the beautiful side of events. God was working in my life. He was always with me through the most difficult times. I marvelled at the kindness and patience of the people who encouraged me. I could always

see their kindness, their joy and their desire to welcome me. Yes, Tanzanians are 'good people'. Always polite, welcoming, and ready to help. They have great respect for their missionaries. I'd like to finish by giving my heartfelt thanks to my family, the Tanzanians, the Missionaries of Africa/White Fathers, and above all to the Lord! Thank you for trusting me and sending me to missions where I have always felt loved and where I have been happy".

The funeral Mass was celebrated in the presence of the urn at 11 a.m. on Saturday, 30 September, 2023, at Saint-Patrice Church in Magog. Father Jean-Marie Tardif presided over the celebration and gave the homily. He was accompanied by a number of confreres and some fifty relatives and friends. Yves' ashes were laid to rest in the Laforest family plot in the Saint-Patrice parish cemetery in Magog. May he rest in peace!

Julien Cormier



Missionaries of Africa

Father Yves Laforest of the Diocese of Magog, Canada, died in Sherbrooke, Canada, on the 24th of September 2023, at the age of 80 with 56 years of missionary life in Tanzania and Canada.

Father Paul LeBlanc of the Diocese of Gaspé, Canada, died in Sherbrooke, Canada, on the 12th of October 2023, at the age of 92 with 66 years of missionary life in the United States, Tanzania, Italy and Canada.

Father Jean-Marie Hougardy of the Diocese of Mechelen-Bruxelles, Belgium, died in Schaerbeek, Belgium, on the 31th October 2023, at the age of 84 with 59 years of missionary life in Malawi and Belgium.

Father Maurice Rambourg of the Diocese of Reims, France, died in Bry-sur-Marne, France, on the 4th of November 2023, at the age of 95 with 70 years of missionary life in Guinea, Burkina-Faso, Ivory Coast and France.





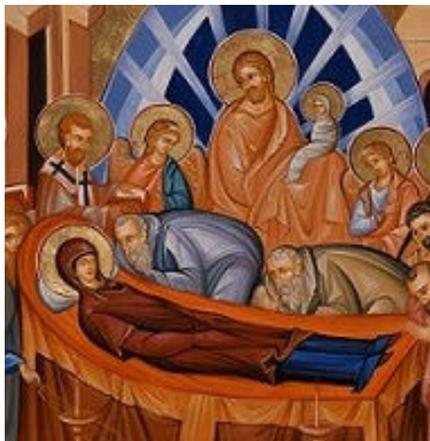
Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

Sister Cecilia (Cecile) Devriese (Roza-Maria). She died in Kortrijk, Belgium, on the 24th of August 2023, at the age of 94 of which 68 years of religious missionary life in Burundi, Rwanda and Belgium.

Sister Geneviève Tissot (Marie-Bernard). She died in Villeurbanne, France, on the 27th of August 2023, at the age of 97 of which 67 years of religious missionary life in Congo Congo R.D. and in France.

Sister Marie Françoise Bouis (Marie Anne d'Arvor). She died in Verrières le buisson, France, on the 17th of October 2023, at the age of 94 of which 73 years of religious missionary life in Uganda, England and France.

Sister Lea Maria Ackermann (Leontia). She died in Trier, Germany, on the 31th of October 2023, at the age of 86 of which 61 years of religious missionary life in Rwanda, Kenya and Germany.



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