



# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA *Ghana-Nigeria Link*



DOUBLE ISSUE



VOLUME 2-3, ISSUE 4-1

OCTOBER 17 – MARCH 2018

## AN EYE ON OUR INITIAL FORMATION:

### With Special Lenses of Six New Confreres from Ghana-Nigeria Province

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### Editorial

"My mom is the best cook in the world"! We would even say more: she is the bestest cook! 150 years after the foundation of our Society and the opening of our first novitiate as Missionaries of Africa in 1868, we remain grateful for the formation system which has been handed down from one generation to another and always opened to the signs of time.

The pot in which the Missionaries of Africa are cooked in, is being praised in this issue of the *Ghana-Nigeria Link* by a number of confreres especially the six new confreres from our province. Indeed one does not need to taste the dishes from other kitchens to praise the deliciously one prepared and enjoyed at home. Our founder, Cardinal Lavignerie, had a dream when he entrusted the first novitiate to a Jesuit priest. He wanted "apostles", "saints", "walking-sticks" malleable in the hand of an old person in view of being of service at all time.

Cooked in this pot for not less than ten years, our six new confreres are sharing about their experiences in the initial formation described as holistic, which started in Nigeria then Ghana for their first phase before being exposed to the internationality and interculturality mostly experienced in the second, third and fourth phases of our formation. They did not cover up the dark side of the pot as they recognised the pains and difficulties encountered not necessarily with the formation system but with human resources. The stories of their oaths and diaconate ordinations by our candidates who are in formation are a witness of the joy experienced in our formation. The above echoes therefore the call during this third and last year of preparation to celebrate the sesquicentennial of our foundation under the theme "Living the future with hope".

We all have a role to play in bringing the firewood needed in the kitchen of our "mom" and in helping her washing the cooking pots. Thus the 2016 Chapter invited us to improve on the essential task of our initial formation 'by the choice of formators and the smooth transition of candidates from one phase of formation to the next' in order 'to form missionary disciples according to the heart of Jesus so that they may have a preferential love for the poor' (CA, 4.1.). Our hope is that our initial formation will continue to cook us into disciplined disciples following in the footsteps of the Lamb of God, the good shepherd who lays down his life for us. Dying with him this Holy Week, may we rise with him at Easter as true witnesses.

**Serge Boroto Zihahirwa, M.Afr**

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE FOLLOWING PROVERB IN Mòòr?

*Sukuru daanɛ yaa tann ki li beet.*

(Literal translation: It is the patient person who cooks a stone and it is cooked.)

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*Think twice before you print me: save papers, save ink, save energy!*

## Provincial's Word



John Aserbire, M.Afr,  
Provincial Superior

As we journey with our Lord, a few confreres and students have volunteered to share with us their experiences of initial formation. I do appreciate their availability, good will and openness. The experiences shared are mostly personal and are within our Formation system. It is about their growth in discipleship.

I believe that growth in discipleship can be compared to seeds that need a rich and healthy environment to grow and produce fruits (Mt. 13:3-9). A seed that lacks the appropriate soil may sprout, but eventually will wither and die. Without a healthy environment, growth can be stagnant, retrogressive or even dead. If we examine a plant growing from seed to maturity, we see that the growth follows a smooth process through different phases. The different phases of our formation system are unique and measure the well-being and growth of our candidates in becoming mature and committed future Missionaries.

Fr. Christopher Chileshe speaks of our Missionary Formation and reminds us of four unique (Ignatian) values that our Society integrated in our Formation system since 150 years of our existence. The charism of our founder Lavignerie remains important. As we prepare to celebrate the 150 Anniversary of our Society, quality formation, Intercultural Community and Team life should remain crucial in our Society.

Together, let us thank God for the work of our Society. We thank God for the gift of vocations and especially for our brothers who made their Oath and were ordained deacons and priests. Indeed, the harvest was rich in our Province and in the Society at large. I wish you a good reading and a fruitful Holy Week.

**John Aserbire, M.Afr**  
(Tamale, Ghana)

# W

e are in the Holy Week. It is a great time for reflection and prayer as we prepare ourselves for the resurrection of our Lord at Easter. We have been invited to think more deeply on our Christian vocation and mission through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

**WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN BRINGING THE FIREWOOD NEEDED IN THE KITCHEN OF OUR "MOM" AND IN HELPING HER WASHING THE COOKING POTS.**  
(Editorial)



*What is being called for is cooking Christianity in an African pot. The African pot "represents the African worldview, traditions, anthropology, and indeed African epistemology which ... form the substratum of the faith and life of the Christians in Africa".*

**Samuel WAJE KUNHLOYOP**

# Missionary Formation: 150 Years Down The Road<sup>1</sup>

Staffing constraints are a common phenomenon in many organisations, religious congregations included. Many organisations pack up and go due to the challenges related to personnel.

Our Society is no exception to this reality. For 150 years now we have been forming and training missionaries for the African world in response to the Mission of Christ and the Church in Africa. To reach where our missionary society is today, vocation promotion and initial formation programs had to be highly upheld and regarded as a lifeline of our religious organisation.

Our entire formation presumes an ongoing program that ensures an effective and long lasting service from the missionaries. "This training in attitude is for the whole of our lives. By taking the means of personal renewal, we also contribute to the inner renewal of the people we meet and to their participation in the advance of God's Kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

It goes without saying that while big numbers of candidates are an interesting factor, the quality of formation is much more important. There is an evident need to emphasize on the personal quality of each candidate and missionary throughout their initial and post-oath formation.

Quality - this was a word already at the heart of our founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, when he instructed our first novice master Fr. Vincent SJ, as follows: "Saints! I want Saints! Plunge them completely into the mould of Saint Ignatius. Let them be like...a walking-stick in the hand of an old



*Christopher Chileshe, M.Afr., speaking to candidates and young confreres*

person to be of service wherever and whenever it is required."<sup>3</sup>

Since then, the mould of St. Ignatius is what is used in the formation of our candidates and missionaries. The four unique values or pillars of success among the Jesuits have also filtered through the Missionaries of Africa. These key Jesuit values are: self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism.<sup>4</sup>

Community life is at the centre of the Missionaries of Africa's way of life and formation. Right from its inception the Society was founded to hinge on communities of at least three. And so Lavigerie would confidently write: "In the Missions to non-Christians, just as in the parishes, the Missionaries will always be at least three together..."<sup>5</sup> The rule of three resurfaces strongly in the 2016 General Chapter which said, "We live in intercultural communities of at least three confreres."<sup>6</sup> At the core of these communities is the *esprit de corps*, the unity of heart, which has guided our missionary Society throughout the 150 years of existence.

This explains why the early sixties saw the ingenious application of team life in the formation houses of the Missionaries of Africa. Vatican II Council and the development of T-

Groups (teams) in the science of Organisation Development, all confirmed that the dream of Lavigerie was indeed meaningful and an important aspect in effectively executing the mission of Christ in the African world.

Today, each formation house and program is designed to host these formation teams that are named by numbers, colours, letters, mission places or particular missionaries such as; Lavigerie, McCoy and Mapera in Ejisu. It is in these teams of formation and apostolate that we exercise the journey of missionary life in the Ignatian way.

## Formation is a space for self-awareness:

Personal growth is very important in our formation programs. Through self-awareness, the formandees come to understand their strengths, weaknesses, values and worldview. For this we have put in place periods of silence, meditation, recollections, retreats, self-evaluation and various liturgies besides the Eucharist. All these aim at allowing the candidate to explore their inner selves at a personal level. Spiritual accompaniment and formative encounters are occasions to share feedback on one's personal journey. Through team meetings and activities, the candidates are able to interact with their peers and develop their interpersonal skills. By cultivating the habit of continuous self-reflection and learning, the future missionaries are trained to become leaders who understand who they are and their values.

*Continued on page 4*

<sup>1</sup> I acknowledgment with gratitude all the confreres who contributed to my questionnaire on Formation in Teams.

<sup>2</sup> Society of the Missionaries of Africa, *Capitular Acts of the 27<sup>th</sup> General Chapter*, Rome, May - June 2010. Pgs. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> Guidelines for the first Novitiate (1868) as given to Fr. Vincent SJ in; *History Series No. 16, Cardinal Lavigerie Anthology Volume I (1857-1874)*, Society of Missionaries of Africa, Rome, 2016. Pg. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Lowney Chris, *Heroic Leadership: Leadership Principles for Lasting Success*, Loyola Press, 2003, Chicago (2<sup>nd</sup> Print 2012) pgs. 15-16

<sup>5</sup> Common Directory for all the Missionaries..., *History Series No.16*. pg. 52

<sup>6</sup> Society of the Missionaries of Africa, *Capitular Acts 28<sup>th</sup> General Chapter May-June 2016*, Rome, 2016. pg. 23.

*Continued from page 3*

### **Formation is an occasion for ingenuity:**

The formandees are to be confidently innovative and adapted to embrace a fast changing world. They are introduced to thinking outside the box and allowed to dare make mistakes in the process of implementing new innovations. Their studies have a wide spectrum extending beyond the traditional philosophical and theological studies. This is meant to help them be more at ease in the complex world of today and tomorrow. In order to make a meaningful impact on society the candidates value current affairs in and outside Africa; they develop good communication skills and the desire to publish themselves. Formation is preparing leaders who are human, ready to grow and respond to a more complex world. Anchored by the non-negotiable principles and values of the Missionaries of Africa, the future missionaries are ready to explore new ideas, approaches and cultures and to adapt confidently with others in the complex African world.

### **Formation is about love:**

The missionary candidate engages others with a positive and loving attitude. The missionary is someone who wears a genuine smile that radiates profound love to all who see it. The formation program of the Society has many varied occasions for



interpersonal relationships. The wider formation house community – including the formators - is also an avenue to show one's love to others, keeping to the original Missionaries of Africa *esprit de corps*. It is this love which then opens up our communities outwards. Our academic institutes are more and more co-educational offering our candidates the opportunity to mature in affectivity and to love as our Lord loves us. Pastoral work is another welcome occasion to give and receive love in the missionary formation. Our future leaders will do well to face the world with greater love than fear. In doing so, they will be able to unlock those potentials in themselves and in others that create an environment of loyalty, affection and mutual support.

### **Formation is a step into heroism:**

Heroic ambitions energise the missionaries and others. The same applies in a formation house where one's heroism is an encouragement to the peers. The heroism of missionaries at times led to martyrdom which in turn inspired new candidates to continue on from those particular instances of witnessing in brokenness. The formation program of the Society continues to impart this value in the future missionaries by introducing them to new tasks in their lives. Some house chores, pastoral placements, academic assignments and many more, come as challenges to various candidates. The formandees

embrace these opportunities with the freedom to choose and the desire to bring out life from challenges; all for the love of Christ and his Community. The candidates in formation already now, dare to plunge themselves into the unknown. Prompted by a clear inner calling, they leave their comfort zones in search for that deeper love and sense of purpose. Our formation program aims at forming leaders who "imagine an inspiring future and strive to shape it rather than passively watching the future happen around them."

In conclusion, the Missionaries of Africa formation program has come from far. The past 150 years was a period of trials and errors. The end result is a successful missionary formation program tailored for the missionary of today and tomorrow. Formation in teams is for us a foretaste of our intercultural community living in mission. It shall continue to be so. Team life in formation and missionary living leads to harmonious growth and fuller maturity. It leads to learning how to be responsible for oneself and for the welfare of the team or community itself. The complex Africa of the future is the playing field for the missionary of tomorrow. He will do well to own and equip himself with the four pillars of a tested spirituality; self-awareness, ingenuity, love and heroism.

**Christopher Chileshe M.Afr**  
(Ejisu, Ghana)



## My Experience of Initial Formation

I, Eze Francis Nchekwubechukwu began my initial formation with the Society of the Missionaries of Africa in February 2009. It was for me a moment of great joy taking a concrete step in actualizing my ultimate dream of serving God and humanity. However, it was also for me a moment characterized by the feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. I was a young man with lots of prospects. As such, I questioned the option I was making and its consequences. I was leaving my home, family, friends, motherland and culture in order to embrace something relatively new.

In brief my formation program has been thus far: five months preparatory session in Morin House in Tamale Ghana. Three years of Philosophy at St Martin of Tours Formation House, Ejisu, Ghana. A year of spiritual formation at our Spiritual Formation Centre in Kasama, Zambia. Two years of pastoral experience (stage) at Notre Dame de l' Assomption Parish in Korhogo, Ivory Coast. Presently, I am in South Africa studying Theology, and this is the fourth year of my final phase of initial formation.

Looking back I cannot but be grateful to God Almighty for the gift of my life, my Christian faith and my missionary vocation. Thus far, the time and process of my initial formation have been fruitful, even though, they were long, rigorous and sometimes painful. Without a doubt the Society of the Missionaries of Africa does have a good formation program and structure that seek the holistic and authentic human development of her candidates. According to a personal observation, our missionary formation program is comparatively different from that of many religious institutions in the sense that the missionary candidates are truly at the heart of their own formation. Consequently, our formation program produces matured confreres and confreres who are convinced in what they do. Something worth applauding is the fact that at all levels of my initial

formation, it was quite observable that candidates were well taken care of, especially their basic needs.

"Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Remarkable in our missionary formation program, is our identity as an international and intercultural apostolic society. This aspect of our community life, is for me, a true witness to the mission of Christ vis-à-vis an egoistic world. Besides our community life, a life of prayer is at the heart of our missionary formation program. A missionary ought to be a man of God for he cannot offer that which he possesses not. Upon a life of prayer depends in great deal the success of the mission entrusted to us. Hence, our missionary formation aims at producing men of God. To this end, much investment has been made in our formation program to ensure that future missionaries do have an interpersonal relationship with God.

My experiences in initial formation have not been exceptionally pleasant. There have also been challenging moments and experiences. One of such challenging experiences is the fact that I have come across a good number of confreres who were prejudiced about certain group of



people and nationalities. It is so sad and painful that among faith communities, people are neither treated as unique individuals nor judged by their way of life. Being born a member of a particular group of people is a thing of fate and not a thing of choice. This is a fact we ought to know.

Having been in formation for ten years,



*Francis Eze, M.Afr, is appointed to PAO*

I am most certain that life is not void of challenges. In this regard, what differentiates me as a missionary from a layman is that I confront life's situation with faith. Over these years, there were moments when life's challenges compelled me to speak to a friend, my spiritual director and to God in prayer. There were also moments when I just have to cry. But in the midst of all life's challenges, I have never lost sight of God who has called me, nor regretted saying yes to his call. The good news here is that my good Lord has never and will never desert me.

In conclusion, I like to echo the following key points. Firstly, candidates in initial formation are at the heart of their formation program. Secondly, the missionary formation is a two-way traffic in the sense that, candidates undergoing formation must also allow formation to pass through them. Thirdly, the missionary formation is a lifelong process. Hence, after initial formation, there is an ongoing formation. Fourthly, the missionary vocation is a joyful vocation especially when prayerfully discerned. Finally, I will like to say that I am very happy especially by my rich experience since I began my initial formation in 2009.

**Francis Eze, M.Afr**  
(Merrivale, South Africa)

## My Holistic Formation

A thousand journey begins with a step and that was the beginning of my holistic formation as well with the M.Afr. Everything started at Ibadan-Nigeria where courses like history of the Society of Missionaries of Africa, Church History, Finance, Spirituality, Computer software and hardware, etc were taught by some confreres M.Afr and other lay persons. Participating at mass at the outstations of the parish like IJAIYE, SASA, etc about two hours drive from Ibadan, was very formative to me. I learned a lot from the people I met there. With Brother Joseph Bakuri as rector, and the other confrères at the parish, they helped me spiritually, morally and others. That experience I had there was a very nice and wonderful preparation for me to go to the philosophy house at Ejisu-Ghana. The courses in the preparation actually helped me and that was a hallmark in my philosophical studies in Ejisu. My personal experience during my years of formation with the Missionary of Africa was good with some challenges as well.

**My Community Life:** Community life was very interesting to me in Ibadan-Nigeria and Ejisu-Ghana. That was where I built that sense of accommodating others with their characters different from me. I consider each person a member of my family with due respect accorded to each member. Nevertheless, there were times we had small quarrels over



one thing or the other because of divergent views or convictions. Community prayers, Eucharistic celebrations, recollections and retreats, etc were very enriching for me to feel that sense of belongings. My experience with some of the formators was very good. I say good in the sense that these formators have a good sense of humanity and consideration for the other as a human person with blood and that I really appreciated. They considered me as their younger brother and human being like themselves. They were ready to help me in all my needs and I cherished their efforts. Some formators looked down on me because of their status as 'confrère' or 'priest'. But my college psychological studies had helped me to understand them without any prejudices or whatsoever. It was a question of inferiority complex if I may say. I like someone who is very open minded and who will correct me rather than keeping it in his heart and at the end of the day he will write it in my reports. During my three years of Philosophy I was very lucky to have some good formators. My days in Ejisu were very good time, the best formation years, and I enjoyed my studies over there. I can say my philosophy days were happier than the other years of formation with the M.Afr so far. I felt that sense of brotherhood, I was considered a responsible person and with my colleagues and some formators, life was a paradise. My holistic formation was laid very well in the preparatory session and was strongly built on at the philosophy grace to the good and qualified formators. Those are the years that actually laid the good foundation to my missionary formation.

**My human formation:** Self-knowledge was the key factor that helped me to adapt easily to my new environment. I was at the first place my personal formator because I have to prove capable of what I do and asked for help on the areas that I cannot do. My formation was in my hands. I consider life and atmosphere of my present situation, as an avenue for me to



*Francis Xavier Angkosaala, M.Afr,  
is appointed to PAC*

develop my personality, my motivation and identity for the mission or a priest to be. I have a higher consideration for others as a human person no matter the age. I share with others what I have and what I know so that the brothers around me can benefit from it. I learn to cultivate a sense of maturity as a responsible man who knows what I am looking for in life. My past working experience has helped me to relate and interact with the members of the community. Sometimes, the behaviours a confrere 'priest' will discourage me but what has always given me the confidence is the one who called me- GOD. Great was my surprise to hear a priest who was supposed to be my formator and he turned to be my 'deformator.' He told lies to a Superior General so that I can be dismissed or punished because of jealousy, hatred, and because I am from Ghana. My faith in God is so solid that whoever plots against me, God will reveal it to me. 'Put an eye on him, he is a Ghanaian' was the first words when I arrived in Kinshasa. What kind of a priest is this? What is more amazing to me is that God answers my prayers. Just like the centurion despite what he was, he came to Jesus, I considered myself exactly in my current situation. This has given me a personal consolation. I have learned a lot from elderly confreres, diocesan priest, colleagues and friends.

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## Memories of Initial Formation

Looking back at my experiences over the past 10 years in formation, I could say it has been very intriguing with lots of challenges and joy; experiences of which the beginning was adorned with a feeling of fear of the unknown that left me pondering on the uncertainties that were forthcoming. To this, I shall be reflecting on some of the positive and negative events that enriched my experiences during these past 10 years.

For that to be accomplished, I will organize my reflection based on the two systems (English and French) of formation that I have passed through.

### a) English System: Pre-Philosophy and Philosophy

This was not my first time in a formation house, since I was opportune to pursue my secondary education in a minor seminary for a period of 6 years. This rigorous/inspirational formation instilled in me a certain way of life. It was a preparation for the future.

My first two months during my postulancy was really challenging due to the fact that, it was my first time in an international/intercultural community. Meeting people from diverse countries and cultures opened my mind to realising the differences and richness in the continent of Africa. Though our seminary views/image were different due to the fact that I was in the minor seminary which orientates a student towards a particular way of life, for example, a seminarian must not drink beer in a bar or public places, etc., thus seeing my colleagues from other nationalities and some parts of Nigeria doing the exact opposite of the image given to me in the minor seminary left me perplexed.

Astonishingly, when some of these experiences were shared during a meal with our formator, he was impressed and encouraged the spirit,



*Gabriel Udoh Ime, M.Afr  
is appointed to EAP*

as being a good missionary spirit: openness to learning new things. For him, that would facilitate relationships and easy contact with the local people. Here, I was captured in a dilemma! Ordinarily, even though this attitude was normal, but from the diocesan perspective, it is not fully recommended for seminarians and even priests, known to be special people.

Who is right and who is wrong? How can I go beyond this cultural conflict/diversity within me? (Here, reinforced a strong discernment). Even though some of the attitudes were questionable, they left me open-minded towards seeing the progress my colleagues were making in reaching out to others in an open and sane relationship. I might have been scandalised at first, slowly I got to see that they are not bad or different from me, rather our foundations were different and it is only in harmonizing our differences that we can learn from each other. Realising this, I questioned my minor seminary formation and tried to understand clearly and better what was implied by my formators.

Then, I began asking myself: "what exactly is intriguing about the lifestyle of the M.Afr as compared to my prior concept of a seminary life"? The first

things that struck my mind were: OPENNESS TO DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY LIFE. I realized that I was able to relate with my formators and colleagues freely, despite our different vision of the ethical world. We ate and exchanged pleasantries together. We also had the decorum to express our feelings. Most of the points concerning community life, spiritual etc. were brought to community meetings to be deliberated and resolved together, etc. As a matter of fact, this provided a better sense to my engagement in missionary life. It was evident that I was not simply following some laid down rules, but principles that everybody is engaged to scrutinize when necessary so as to adapt and to translate into reality.

As fruit of this gospel way of life, we can emphasise more on the accent put on auto-formation by the formators. The Formators counted more on the sense of judgement and maturity of the students. Hence, I felt more conscientious of my actions and its consequences. Above all, in this system, I was impressed to hear that most students freely decide on their own to quit this way of life for one reason or the other. I believe, it is a benefit of making the students to understand when possible, the life and principles they are proposed to follow, than forcing them to swallow ignorantly, formative principles. These are the aspects that I find slightly different from the French system.

This development has been one of the major impacts that the initial formation has had on me. Because, it helps strengthen what I recognized as the main pillar of the initial formation: **"the Human Development"**. This I recognized because, first and foremost in life, one struggles to understand oneself, followed by one's surroundings. When the human aspect is not stable, it is difficult to appreciate the intellectual, spiritual and apostolic aspects in formation. But as one slowly comprehends the realities around oneself, so he begins to appreciate the beauty and joy of living in communion with others.

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## My Experiences during these Past Years of Initial Formation

My name is Kingsley Onyedikachi Njimogu. I hail from Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. I was born and brought up in Jos Plateau State. My childhood experience in Jos was really lovely. Despite the conflicting situation between Christians and Muslims based on political interests, the strong Christian faith in this environment really transformed me and inspired a strong desire to serve God and humanity at large.

At the end of my secondary school education in 2004, I felt a strong desire to consecrate my life to God and to the service of the church. I therefore applied for admission into the Archdiocese of Jos and was refused admission because there were a lot of candidates who had applied. Sometime around 2005 and 2006, I came in contact with the Missionaries of Africa through two of their candidates who had just finished their pastoral experiences and were heading to study theology. I felt seduced by their experience shared about the Missionaries of Africa. From then, I started researching about the society to have more information.

Finally, after several 'come and see' sessions with the vocations director, I was admitted in 2008 to start my formation. My first experience of the initial formation was at Saint Clement formation house, Ibadan, Nigeria. At the start, it was really difficult for me to adapt into the new style of life. The fact that I never attended a minor seminary makes the matter worst since everything was totally new to me. The postulancy was a real stage of initiation and preparation for me.

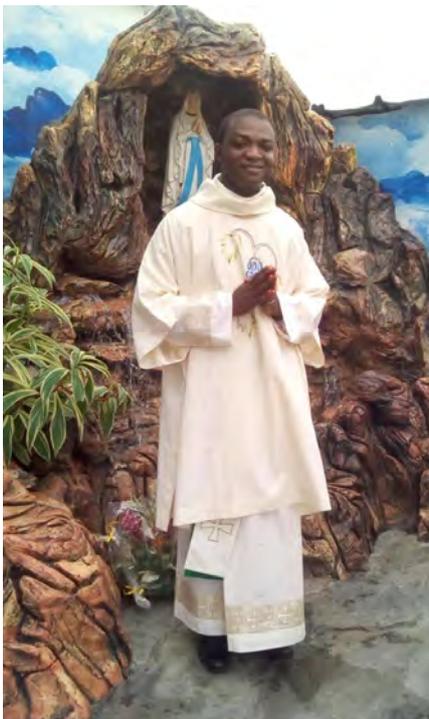
At the end of my postulancy, I left Nigeria to Saint Martin of Tours formation house, Ejisu in Ghana to study philosophy and religious studies. The three years spent in Ghana was really rich. I must confess that my formation was really solid because it was holistic. During my philosophy years, I had an intense human, spiritual, and intellectual formation. Moreover, I was enriched by the inter-



*Kingsley Onyedikachi Njimogu, M.Afr,  
is appointed to PAC*

cultural, international and inter-continental nature of the community. I realized that there are different ways of doing the same thing depending on ones' culture. My philosophy years was indeed the foundation on which I continued to develop different aspects of my life.

In 2011, I was sent to Bobo-dioulasso in Burkina Faso for my novitiate. At the beginning it was really difficult to participate in the spiritual exercises that were given in French. I had to struggle with the language throughout my stay in the novitiate. However, the novitiate was for me an opportunity to



intensify my relationship with God and being in touch with myself. This period gave me the opportunity to reconcile the relationship between my intellectual acquis and my faith in Christ. This period was indeed a confirmation of the relationship I desired deep down in me. The exercise of the Ignatian spirituality formed me to learn how to discern the will of God in my life. And most importantly, finding God in all things.

From Burkina Faso, I was sent to Rwanda for two years pastoral experience. It marvels me how unique and rich the different phases of formation are. I must admit that each phase of formation has had significant influence on me. My pastoral experience in Kigali Rwanda helped me to be in touch with different realities of life. I had the opportunity to carry out my pastoral experience in an environment that is fragile after having experienced a genocide in 1994.

After my two years of pastoral experience in Kigali, I was appointed to Ivory Coast to study theology. Initially I was appointed to do three years of theology, but on arriving, the program was changed from three years to four years.

I arrived in Abidjan in 2014. My four years' experience in this final phase of initial formation has been full of different qualities. I received a quality theological formation which has prepared me to defend the doctrine of the Christian faith. In addition to the intellectual formation, I had the opportunity of being in touch with the human reality of life in Abidjan.

Being at the end of my initial formation, I realized how much the different phases of formation have transformed me into a mature Christian and a humble missionary of Africa. Now I feel ready to begin my mission in humility and patience trusting in God's grace that has accompanied me throughout these years.

**Kingsley Onyedikachi Njimogu, M.Afr**  
(Abidjan, Ivory Coast)

## My personal Experience of Initial Formation with the M.Afr

Just like any other personal experience, mine is not devoid of subjectivity. My years of formation are rich in experience for the fact that the Society of the Missionaries of Africa is an intercultural, interracial and international society. I have therefore met both colleagues students and formators who have different ways of seeing and doing things. Sometimes it makes me wonder if it's the same society. But I think what counts is that, it's the same spirit. In general, I had a formation that took into account my spiritual and human development.

I equally have gone through a lot of feelings both interesting and uninteresting ones as I moved from one formation house to another: joy, frustration, love, anguish, anxiety, peace, deception etc.

But for me, it's simply wonderful to belong to the society of the Missionaries of Africa for what it stands for (Justice and peace, inter religious dialogue, first evangelization)

and for the holistic formation offered to the students. With all that I had received in formation, I congratulate all the formators especially those I have met because I think it's the best that any religious society would want to offer to its future generation.

I have beautiful memories of my philosophical formation. I was particularly touched by the level of matured formation that was given. It was good to see how both students and formators engaged in a constructive discussion on community projects. The most interesting is that, as much as the formators wanted to inculcate the spirit of the Society; they did it in a dialogue full of maturity. This is one of the things that have always given me a lot of joy in my vocation journey. This spirit is found in many of the Missionaries of Africa, which I have come across.

Beyond my personal sentiments of joy and pain, I think in all it was Christ Himself who was at the center of all



*Peter Claver Kogh, M.Afr,  
is appointed to Maghreb*

my experiences. I find my joy in the Lord and in time of pain, I find refuge in Him.

It is my prayer and my wish that the formation that is given should always be revisited as it is done. We know that this helps us to make discernment on the charisms especially in our days where personal and group mentalities change tremendously. And we the young ones are in the heart of these changes which affect us.

Long live the vision of Cardinal Lavignerie and may the Will of our Lord Jesus Christ be done through the Missionaries of Africa.

**Peter Claver Kogh, M.Afr**  
(Abidjan, Ivory Coast)



The cretan labyrinth consists of two paths that cross and wind around each other. We see this a symbolic representation of the relationship between formator and formandi. The crossing signifies the cross of Christ who is the model formator and the one in whom our purpose is set forth, as we continue our pilgrim way, embracing our truth and striving for the fullness of life. (<http://sjti.ac.za/formation-for-formators-programme/>)

## The Pains and Joys of My Missionary Formation

The gift of the priestly vocation, placed in the hearts of some men by God, obliges the Church to propose to them a serious journey of formation. It was some ten years ago when I received my calling to the priestly vocation (The Missionaries of Africa). I was sent to Ibadan, Nigeria for a six months preparation session, with my 12 other brothers. This was the beginning of guarding and fostering of our vocation that we may bear matures fruits. It was a challenging and interesting moment. From the word go, I asked myself if I will make it to the end. As the program evolved, I immediately noticed that the formation of the Missionaries of Africa was understood as one, integral, grounded in community and Missionary in spirit. I found myself fully involved by the help of the formators at that time and my fellow brothers. We were challenged by our formators and we as candidates also challenged each other which allowed us to bring out the gifts of each one of us.

I was later sent back to Ghana my home country at the end of my preparation session, with a good recommendation from the formation team to start philosophy in Ejisu. The three years in Ejisu was a time to experience what community life was. The journey there was one of discipleship, which was seen through a unifying lens, giving shape and structure to the identity of who the candidate was (Me) and that made me aware of being a gift of self to the



Society and the Church. The three years were more like being at home. I felt at home with the community despite the challenges, it was all a joyful period.

Then came the Spiritual Year. I was granted the opportunity to have my Spiritual Year in Zambia (Kasama). The Spiritual Year for me was appreciated as the centre of one's life in formation, and continues through the whole of life as a Missionary of Africa. During the Spiritual Year it was a clear sign to me that the entire journey of formation must never be reduced to a single aspect, but it must always be an integrated journey of the candidate called to a Missionary life. The kind of formation I received was of a communitarian character. A vocation I recognized as a gift from God to the Church and the world through the Missionaries of Africa. This formation is a path to sanctify oneself and others that should not be followed in an individualistic manner, but must always have at its point of reference the rest of the community. I understood and acted accordingly, sharing a common responsibility, with due regard to the duties entrusted to me. At the end it was a holistic formation received at that level. There was time for proper discernment and true identification of what my vocation is about.

Stage, which is a phase of vocational synthesis, was one of the beautiful phases which I appreciated. It is never easy to stay in a community of multi-nationality with an age gap of 33. I was the youngest at a point in time and the only African for the first year of my stage. At a point in time I felt like going back home, because I felt that I did not fit into the community. But with the help of some confreres who came around for their holidays and with the encouragement of my spiritual director and stage coordinator I found joy in what I was doing. I also found joy through the staff and students of the Centre of Pelican in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). In stage it was not



*Stephen Beru, M.Afr, is appointed to PEP*

easy for me. Since I was having my pastoral experience in a study centre (Pelican), I had a big problem with the language. I had to give an English course and yet, I had to explain from time to time in French so that the students understood me. I was not comfortable at the beginning, because of my limited French. But after a few weeks, I enjoyed this program because it gave me the opportunity to learn French and at the same time have my pastoral experience. I had the opportunity to meet many students who had difficulties in their studies and in their personal lives. I listened to them and was touched by what they shared about their personal and even spiritual lives. I was really happy to listen to them and also to share my life experience with them. I am a young person like them and I have had difficulties in my studies and life in general. It was an opportunity to share my faith as a Catholic who is in formation to become a missionary priest. The stage helped me to deepen what I discovered during the novitiate. Everything I experienced during the novitiate was not really practical, and it was when I arrived on the ground that everything became a reality. However, I found continuity between the spiritual year and the stage.

*Continued on page 15*

## Stage: Sweet and Tough Moment of Encounter

**S** always considered the third phase of formation of missionaries of Africa as sweet and tough moment of encounter with the Lord in the formation of Missionaries of Africa. When I was in philosophy at Ruzizi Bukavu D.R.C., I envied the stagiaires who came around to greet us in our formation Centre and when I met them in their various Parishes for a short while, most of them if not all, seemed to be, free and happy in their various assignments. To see stagiaires sharing responsibilities with “confreres” as if, they were themselves full members of the Society was very attractive to me. My own stage was interesting and challenging. An unstable community with regards to the change of confreres in the community, the age gap and cultures, different approaches to the mission and so forth were but among the challenges I faced at Chezi, Malawi. Having been through the formation of Missionaries of Africa myself, I always try to understand stagiaires going through this stage of formation full of sweet and tough moments.

The confreres are the main formators during the stage. I believe that the community of the missionaries of Africa is not the only formation team of the stagiaires. Besides the community, the local Church offers an indirect formation team made of priests and religious working in the Diocese most especially those who are in direct contact with our communities, catechists, elders, and other Lay faithful in general. They all offer themselves through their way of practicing the faith in an inculturated way, their pieces of advice and some guidelines and challenges. Confreres are the first Formators who help the stagiaire in his integration in the mission in which the community is involved. The experience of the stage, like that of the formation as whole, differs from one community or formation house to the other. The particularity of stage is that some

confreres, who could never be entrusted with the formation of the candidates for one reason or the other, are directly responsible for the formation of stagiaires and their word seems to be final! Rarely, there is workshop of confreres about formation of stagiaires. Each one of us follows his conscience and his will.

Some communities could be divided and the stagiaire needs just to be mature enough to remain focused on the reason why he is there. What is positive about it, is that since there will never be a perfect community anywhere in the world, it is for the good of stagiaires to have a real taste of missionary life so as to confirm their resilience in tomorrow's challenges of missionary life after the completion of the initial formation. In the stage, the various theories and pieces of advices are put to the test. Nonetheless, my opinion would be that confreres should always consider the fragility of the vocation of the stagiaire who is with them. In formation houses per se, students rarely witness the division and confrontations of the formators but in the stage some stagiaires have first hand information about what divides or unites the community. That is part of the sweetness and the toughness of this phase of formation without which the formation may look illusionary.

Stage in Nigeria offers a different taste. So far, the Missionaries of Africa have only been in the Yoruba land. The stagiaires are seen like seminarians. The seminarians prostrate to greet priests and cannot call them by name with mentioning Reverend Father. Such practice is

alien to our stagiaires who come from various cultures. The seminarians live a somehow distanced life from that of the priests. In some parishes they have their meals in the kitchen or they eat when the priests have left the table. Generally they will not eat with the priests. They have less access to the drinks in the house; officially they seem to take soft drinks. Visibly they occupy a secondary place. In the Parishes, besides the pastoral work, they participate in the household work especially washing and ironing cassocks of priest and liturgical linens. They rarely have fixed programs apart from receiving directives from the Parish priests, etc. In Diocesan gatherings they have their food separately and sometimes invitations to Parishes and Religious communities state clearly that only priests and final professed religious are invited.

It has always been my challenge to see how we integrated stagiaires in our programs differently from the local church's practices. The stagiaires partake in all community programs and they head many of them. Though, a few times we have to leave them behind while we go to attend the various church functions. However in the functions we host in our communities they have been no discrimination of our stagiaires. On the other hand, I could notice that the young man is somehow lonely because the openings to socialise with priests is somehow narrow most especially as some of them do not expect “a seminarian” to be around. Simply the milieu does not favour the socialisation between stagiaires and religious, most especially priests.

**THE PARTICULARITY OF STAGE IS THAT SOME CONFRERES, WHO COULD NEVER BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE FORMATION OF THE CANDIDATES FOR ONE REASON OR THE OTHER, ARE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FORMATION OF STAGIAIRES AND THEIR WORD SEEMS TO BE FINAL! RARELY, THERE IS WORKSHOP OF CONFRERES ABOUT FORMATION OF STAGIAIRES. EACH ONE OF US FOLLOWS HIS CONSCIENCE AND HIS WILL.**



*Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr*

*Continued on page 20*

# NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

During this period the Provincial Council held 2 meetings (07th – 09th November 2017 and 16th to 18th January 2018). We would like to share the following news:

- Andrew Anab's appointment to Ejisu formation house was changed by the General Council. He will now be going to the 4<sup>th</sup> phase formation house in Kinshasa, DRC.
- The proposal to join the four year degree program at Ejisu was accepted by the General Council. This nullifies efforts to seek the issuance of ECOWAS passports to our candidates.
- Confreres need to be reminded on the importance and need to write the Last Will and Testament. The councillors should be the first to do so before we encourage the other confreres. By next meeting each councillor should have done theirs. The Secretary would send soft copies of the Last Will and Testament templates to the councillors.
- William Curran joined officially the Provincial House community on his return from his home leave making the Provincial House the biggest community in our Apostolic Area with a membership of five confreres.
- Jesus Maria Velasco left for good in October 2017 and has since arrived safely at home in Spain. He left a gap at the centre which is being felt heavily. Thus there has always been and still is, a request for a Missionary of Africa confrere to come in and take part in the services of retreat giving at the Spiritual Renewal Centre in Kumasi.
- The Missa Family - Bolgatanga group celebrated their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2017 at Bolgatanga Cathedral.
- As each province is meant to form its own Development Committees, the following were endorsed by the Ghana-Nigeria Province accordingly:
  - **Provincial Development Committee (PDC):** Christopher Chileshe, Patrick Obai Emukule, Victor Shehu and John Abobo in his capacity as Provincial Treasurer.
  - **Ghana Development Committee (GDC):** Patrick O Emukule, Christopher Chileshe, Gaspard Cirimwami, Serge Boroto and John Abobo in his capacity as Treasurer.
  - **Nigeria Development Committee (NDC):** Victor Shehu, Virgilius Kawama, James Ngahy and Piet de Bekker in his capacity as Treasurer. However, in the meeting of January the Council appointed Gilbert Rukundo to join Victor Shehu and Piet de Bekker as the new Nigeria Development Committee - NDC.
- The General Council approved the statutes of the Ghana-Nigeria Province in their letter Prot: 17/1197. Clement Tuureh has printed the 'Statutes for Ghana-Nigeria Province' and the booklet of contacts for all confreres of the province. Copies were available for distribution to all confreres and stagiaires in the province.
- Stephen Ofonikot finally received his permit for Zambia and has arrived there.
- The house is now ready in Minna. Victor has moved in while we wait for the full community.
- Each sector has provided stagiaires with a list of possible spiritual directors in their vicinity.
- A Session for confreres in their 2<sup>nd</sup> term of mission was announced. It will take place in Bobo- Dioulasso from 1<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2018. On the list is Clement Tuureh from our province. The Provincial will find out if more confreres from our province qualify to attend this meeting.
- The May 2018 Provincial Common Retreat will be held from 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018 at the Spiritual Renewal Centre in Kumasi, Ghana. By 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018 names of all the attendants should be made known. All the names should be sent to Clement Tuureh. The preacher of the retreat is Br. Nee Wayoe (Holy Cross) of Cape Coast. The May 2018 retreat will be for all confreres in the province. Confreres are therefore encouraged to plan for this retreat in this year.
- Roger Sinabisi was granted the travel visa and flew to Belgium on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- Clement Tuureh continues to run the vocation animation program in the Ghana sector and to organize ordinations of our young confreres. Anthony Batieka's ordination took place on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and was a moment of great joy and celebration.
- Hilaire Paluku arrived safely in Nyankpala bringing the number to four in the community. They celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Amona's ordination on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- There is a Muslim Project in Tamale which was started some time ago by the Missionaries of Africa. Pierre Songré is the contact person who visits the project for the Missionaries of Africa. The MSOLA had also at one time been involved. Today, a diocesan priest trained in Islamology is the in-charge of the centre.
- In Bunkpurugu, the peace efforts had earlier been threatened but fortunately a "blood burial" ceremony was held at Sayeegu on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2018. This may help to bring about understanding between the two conflicting clans. Gazena as JPIC-ED Coordinator and Amani as Parish Priest of Bunkpurugu, together with the local JPIC commission of the parish witnessed the event.
- Peter Nyirenda was welcomed at Jirapa parish for his language course which begun on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- John Mubanga will be going on home leave from April to July 2018.

# NEWS FROM the PROVINCE

- Christopher Chileshe continues his studies in Organization Development at SAIDI in the Philippines. He is due for his home leave in June/July 2018.
- Jonathan Bahago left for Nairobi.
- The Provincial and Emmanuel Mambwe visited the Bishop of Minna who promised to give us an apostolate as soon as the paperwork for our insertion is completed. We urgently need a community of confreres in Minna to be with Victor who is alone at the moment.
- The JPIC-ED commission comprises: Gazena Haile (Chair), James Ngahy, Amani Bulambo, Gaspard Cirimwami, Jacek Wroblewski, and John C Mubanga.
- In the Nigeria Sector, James is involved in the apostolate of Integrity in Ministry and youth empowerment projects. All the Justice Development and Peace activities are doing well.
- The JPIC-ED commission will now take over the preparations for the 150 years anniversary in the province. They will build on what has been done so far and add more activities in line with the Society preparations. They will work in collaboration with the MSOLA.
- The maiden meeting of the Provincial Development Committee was held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017. At this meeting the organogram of the Development Committee in the province was clarified. The vision and mission of the committees was given as "Fundraising For Mission". The meeting put in place a schedule for two seminars on Project Management and Writing. The Ghana seminar was set for 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> February 2018 and the Nigeria seminar from 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> April 2018.
- Two members of the media team have left the province. There is a need for all the confreres in the province to contribute to the Link. The team invites confreres to pass on pictures and articles of various activities happening in their communities. This will help us to use the media in our mission of evangelisation.
- The WhatsApp forum was found to be doing well. It is an open forum and confreres must be free to share what they like. Corrections are normal and will have to continue to be given. It will be good to correct people privately rather than on the very same forum, unless the correction is in form of a general announcement.
- The Ejisu students composed a hymn on the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Society.
- There are six priestly ordinations expected in the province in 2018, three Ghanaians and three Nigerians.
- Three Ghanaian Brothers will be co-celebrating their silver jubilee mid this year (2018). They are Bros. Patrick Norah, Simon Gornah and John Abobo. Fr. Robert Tebri is also celebrating his silver jubilee as priest this year. The joint celebration is tentatively scheduled to take place at St. Benedict Parish in Wa. The date has not yet been finalised but is thought to be in August.
- The stagiaires' meeting took place in Ibadan, Nigeria on 18<sup>th</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

**Next Provincial meeting: 10<sup>th</sup> May (Arrival) and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (Departure): Venue - Tamale.**

## Requiescat In Pace

Some family members of our confreres were called to glory; those we recorded:

- On 14 October 2017: Alex Mubanga, father of John Mubanga
- On 14 November 2017: Patrick Suzagla, father of late Victor Dery
- On 17 November 2017: Julius Kanyembo, uncle of Emmanuel Mambwe
- On 06 December 2017: Charles Gornah, brother of Simon Gornah
- On 07 January 2018: Celina Tuureh, stepmother of Clement Tuureh
- On 29 January 2018: Veronica Kawama, mother of Virgilius Kawama
- On 01 February 2018: Lydia Asore, aunt of John Asanyire
- On 06 March 2018: Br. Joseph the Hermit, uncle of late Martin Addai.



*"Give them eternal rest, O Lord, and may your light shine on them for ever."*

## Oath and Diaconate Ordination in Abidjan

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on who his favour rest” (Lk. 2, 14). With these words, the Holy Mother Church, the Lavigerie family and the province of Ghana-Nigeria in particular are happy to celebrate the missionary oath and the diaconate ordination of their two brothers- Rev. Peter Clever and Rev. Kingsley. They have been ordained and called to the order of clergy on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, 2017 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Before we make a brief summary of the events here in Abidjan, permit me to present these great Deacons of the Holy Church.

Peter Clever KOGH was born on the 09/09/1985 into a family of five: Mr. and Mrs. Sylvester KOGH and Marcella KOGH, his elder sister Patience KOGH, his senior brother Patrick KOGH and himself. His father passed away in January 2004. He is from the Upper West Region of Ghana, Nandom.

He started his postulancy in Ibadan, Nigeria in 2008 and philosophy in September the same year at Ejisu, Ghana. After 3 years, He was sent to Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso for his novitiate. He had his stage experience in Koudougou, Burkina Faso. Presently, he is in Abidjan, Ivory Coast for theology where he just took his missionary oath on 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2017 and ordained the same day as a deacon. Pray for this young and holy servant of God.

Kingsley Onyedikachi Njimogu was born on the 06/07/1985 in Jos Plateau State, Nigeria. He hails from Umuahia south local government area of Abia State. He is the last born child in a family of five children. After the death of his father and two of his brothers, Kingsley has his mother, an elder brother and an elder sister whom he

cherishes so dearly.

After his secondary school education, Kingsley began his Missionary formation in Ibadan, Nigeria. After his postulancy in Nigeria, he was sent to Ghana for his philosophical studies at the Spiritan University College Ejisu, Ashanti. Later, he was appointed to Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso for his novitiate. After a year of intimacy with the Lord, Kingsley was appointed to Kigali, Rwanda where he spent two years of apostolic stage. Presently he is in Ivory Coast where he has pronounced his missionary oath and ordained deacon on the 09/12/2017. Pray for him and his mission.

How it all started!

On the 08/12/2017, the feast day of the Mary Immaculate Conception, 10 candidates here in Abidjan Theological Centre shared their vocational experience with the community and the entire invited guest. It was a solemn occasion which was accompanied by readings from the Holy Scriptures, followed by the sharing of vocation stories. Each candidate was given adequate time to share and express his feelings and joys. It was at this time that Rev. Peter Clever and Rev. Kingsley shared their deep touching vocational experience. After this solemn sharing, it was time for the prayers of intercession and a final blessing by the Rector of Lavigerie fraternity, Rev. Fr. François Bigeziki.

The next day, the 09/12/2017 at around 9:30 am, the Eucharistic celebration started at the parish of Saint John Baptist, Abobo-Avocatier. The Mass was presided by his Lordship, Bishop Alexis, the bishop of Agbo-ville in Ivory Coast. There was a member of the general council in person of Rev. Fr. Martin Grenier, who



L-R: Peter Clever and Kingsley, M.Afr

was the representative of the Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa and before whom our brothers took their missionary oath. Rev. Peter Clever and Rev. Kingsley warmly expressed their willingness to engage definitively in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. During this time, the Assistant Superior asked the consent of all White Fathers present whether to accept them or not and a big “YES” was pronounced. One significant thing was the presence of Rev. Fr. Bob Tebri, the secretary for Initial Formation of the Missionaries of Africa at the occasion.

After their acceptance into the holy family of Lavigerie, the rite of diaconate ordination was presented. At this juncture, all the candidates were presented to the Bishop and the entire people of God by the Rector. A big acclamation and confirmation of their good deeds was visible in the eyes of the faithful. At that time, looks at the smile on the faces of Peter Clever and Kingsley, were beaming. Oh God! Really it was a joyous occasion. Around 11:35am, our brothers were no longer lay faithful but people called to the holy, royal, kingly and priestly family in the Church and in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. I would like to say congratulations to our other brothers ordained in other formation houses. Long live the Holy Church, long live Lavigerie family and long live the great province of Ghana-Nigeria. Congratulations! Congratulations!!

**Cyprian Chia**  
(Student in Theology—Abidjan)



*Continued from page 7*

**b) French System: Novitiate and Theology**

My experiences in pre-First Phase and first Phase nearly made me commit the fallacy of hasty generalization. My arrival in French system, most especially at the level of the novitiate and theology houses I went through, made me imagine that M.Afr. Formation system varies from one region to another, because each system seems to have a certain tradition and culture. The French system, precisely, the novitiate and theology houses, respectively, brought me closer, in most aspects, to the image and style of life of my diocesan minor seminary, illustrated above.

Unlike my experiences of the English system earlier highlighted, the French system on the other hand seems to focalize more on theoretical and abstract dimensions in formation, with less accent on concrete aspect. For instance, creating enough time to formulate a fabulous "theme of the

year", with sensational sub-titles, decorated with impressive words that will entice whosoever would read it, seems to be of greater importance than realising concretely, even half of the project at the end of the year. Even, this cut across the academic programme. There is a multiplication of courses with a similar object of thought which oblige students, instead of personal research and practical work; they rather stay every day in classroom listening to different professors on different courses repeating similar concepts. Simply, consciously or unconsciously, accent in daily engagement is apparently laid mostly on sumptuous imaginations with abundant of seducing speeches and arguments than concrete facts.

My intention here is far from giving a detail of formation programme which is not the aim of this sharing. Nevertheless, I esteem necessary to glimpse through some of the core aspect of each system, so as to underline its impact. Contrary to the

houses of formation in the English system that I have passed through, in the French system there is less engagement of students in their formation house on deliberation and decision making on matters concerning community life, spiritual etc. Consequently, there appears to be less sense of commitment, creativity and initiative, as students are more or less fenced in the laid down principles or what is defined by the formators.

In a nutshell, the whole experience of the two systems has been so interesting, as most of the challenges I met along the way appeared to be a stepping stone for a better self-awareness. My contact with diverse realities has improved in me the spirit of openness: self-openness and openness to external world. It enables me to make a proper auto-assessment and of my surrounding, in order to sunder out what is essential for my missionary growth.

**Gabriel Udoh Ime, M.Afr**  
(Kinshasa, D.R. Congo)

*Continued from page 10*

During the stage I met Jesus alone in my prayer. In the novitiate I prayed for people whom I had not met. I prayed for the religious experiencing difficulties in their mission, the families in difficulty without seeing them. But as a stagiaire, I tasted the love of God and shared the life of those around me. I met them at all times and suffered with them. The stage was a time of learning and practice to prepare me for the future. This is the moment to better understand the reality of my missionary life. I noticed that it is now that I am really in relation with God, because I am seeing things in their reality. My communication, my listening and my sharing are always close to my confreres and the people with whom I do my apostolate. The stage made me realize that I must always take the time to better understand people, listen well and not judge them. What I had experienced during the stage gave me the

opportunity to deepen it during the fourth phase (Theology). Why did I want to go deeper into this area? It is because the problems of the people I met touched me a lot.

I will say I discovered my vocation at a more advanced age with a more developed personality and a life journey characterized by a range of experience in other fields. Therefore there was the need for a serious discernment of my motivations in responding to my call. But I believe I was given time to be accompanied in a serious and comprehensive journey by my vocation director Rev. Brother Patrick Norah, which include me understanding more of community life. This has led to me having a solid spiritual and theological formation, taken into account of my personal profile.

To conclude, for me the priestly vocation (Missionary life) begins with the gift of divine grace, which is then

sealed in the sacramental ordination. This gift is expressed over time through the mediation of the Church, which calls and sends in the name of God. The personal response develops through the formation begins with an awareness of the gift received and matures gradually until one comes to a stable life. This vocation for me is in the one who receives it, a complete giving of himself for the service of the people of God, as an image of Christ the Spouse. My call today is therefore, called to form myself so that my heart and my life conformed to the Lord Jesus, in this way becoming a sign of the love God has for me. By being intimately united to Christ, I will be able to preach the Gospel and become an instrument of the mercy of God to guide and give correction, to intercede and care for the spiritual life of the faithful entrusted to me to listen and welcome all.

**Stephen Beru, M.Afr**  
(Merrivale, South Africa)

## Oath and Diaconate Ordination in Merrivale

At long last Africans will evangelise Africa, these are words of our beloved founder, cardinal Charles Lavigerie. The journey that started 150 years ago is being fulfilled today in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. Here at the Merrivale formation house the above statement was being fulfilled by the ordination of 18 deacons who became part of the members of the Missionaries of Africa by the oath they took. Among them were Francis Eze from Nigeria and Stephen Beru from Ghana; also Christopher Nkandu and Pierre Chanel Ulama did their stage in the province of Ghana-Nigeria.

In view of the celebration of the 150 years of the Society we had chosen the motto for the year in our formation house as "with gratitude for our past and open to the Holy spirit let us be witness to all." With this in mind, to be able to witness to all, the Society needs the personnel to be able to accomplish its goals. It was therefore with great gratitude to see such a number which has not been witnessed for many years in any of the formation houses of the Missionaries of Africa.

It was of great joy as my elder brothers in formation accomplished their part of the journey in their call which they started down the line. The ceremony started with a triumph entry into the Society which was marked by taking the missionary oath on Friday 15 December 2017 in the chapel of our formation house. The oath was received by the Assistant Superior General, Father Didier Sawadogo. Two bishops and priests from the Missionaries of Africa and the invited priests came to witness the event and encourage their younger brothers. Our parents too were around to witness what their children were promising.

In his Homily, the Assistant Superior General reminded the candidates about the commitment they were making to the Society as it illustrates what the last chapter stated concerning the way of life as a Missionary of Africa; *'Filled with the Joy of the Gospel and guided by the Spirit, we are in an intercultural*



*Missionary Society with family Spirit. Sent out to the African world and wherever our charism is needed, for a prophetic mission of encounter and witness to the love of God.'* This is what they were going to live for their entire life unless otherwise!

They are to add flavour not to take it out from the society. This was more meaningful as most of them possessed different talents that were observed by the formators which will be of great help wherever they will be in the mission. They have to be joyful servants of God especially to people they minister in their office. To those they are sent to, they need to love them just as Jesus himself showed love to them in their journey.

On their part, they appreciated all those who supported them in different areas during their formation and still remembered that though they have become confreres, they still need the help and guidance from their seniors.



This was welcomed since even in the mouth the molar teeth recognise the work of the canine teeth of having more experience in the mouth though they both share the space in the mouth. The new confreres also wished their young brothers well and asked prayers from them.

The next day, Saturday 16 December 2017, was the diaconate ordination which was hosted by St Vincent Parish KwaMphumuza. The church was packed with parishioners from the parish, guests and family members of the candidates. There was such joy as the candidates entered the church in procession. It was a sight to behold as this was such a large group to be ordained to the ministry of diaconate. The choir had treated us to variety of songs from all around Africa since most of our candidates belong to Africa. Cardinal Wilfred Napier ordained all the candidates and right before our eyes we had 18 newly ordained deacons whose joy was overflowing; this was evident in their smiles and in their dancing as they congratulated each other. It would be a moment fondly remembered by all who attended this special occasion.

On my part I wish them all the best in their ministry and ask them to take our Master Jesus Christ as their example.

**James Rioba**

(Student in Theology—Merrivale)

## Fr. Anthony Batioka Wie, M.Afr - Priestly Ordination

Cardinal Lavignier's family continues growing day by day. On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2017 the Priestly Ordination of our young confrère Fr. Antony BATIEKA WIE took place at St. Gabriel Parish at Hain in Wa diocese. We started with a missionary journey; we journeyed on a rough road without anyone of us knowing the road on which we were traveling. The following day the Holy Eucharist of Ordination, presided over by our confrère Richard K. BAAWOBR Bishop of Wa, started at 9:45am. After a welcome address by the Parish Priest Fr. John to the whole congregation particularly to the Bishop and the entire family of the Missionaries of Africa present, the diocesan MC of Wa diocese continued and took us through the celebration.

The candidate was then called by the Provincial Superior of Ghana Nigeria and responded willingly and moved towards the Altar accompanied by his mother and father. He was then presented to the Bishop and was warmly welcomed. The candidate, after an interrogation by the Bishop, was chosen to be ordained to the Priestly Ministry. A high and vibrant Gloria song in Dagaare followed in which we were all totally immersed.

### The liturgy of the Word

We proceeded with the Liturgy of the Word. The first reading was taken from the Prophet Jeremiah (**Jer. 1: 4-9**) in English; the second from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (**Eph. 4: 1-7, 11-13**) in Dagaare and the Gospel according to John (**John 1: 45-51**) in both languages.

### Homily

The homily was given by the Bishop. He first started by inviting the faithful to pray for more vocations for the Church, referring to the second reading. Then he invited the candidate to explain why he chose these readings. These are some of Fr. Antony's motivations in choosing these readings:

The choice of Jeremiah: *throughout my life I have always depended on the Divine Providence. Therefore, I feel like my vocation was already prepared by God Himself.*

The choice of Ephesians: *I would like to be the kind of servant described in the second reading.*

The gospel: *Due to my family background, others and even myself, thought that nothing good can come from my family. What good can come from this village? By God's will and by his grace here I am!*

And the Bishop proceeded with the homily. The intention with which one comes for his or her vocation is purified later on as one moves forward in deepening his/her relationship with the Lord. God uses people to call us. And we are called to reach out to touch people's lives and bring them to God. The missionary call is universal. Antony's call is a reminder to all of us: called to be missionaries. Turning to Antony the Bishop said: You being a missionary today is a reminder to you to make God present among his people. Three factors are required to achieve that goal:



- Preaching the Word of God to His people

- Celebrating or administering the sacraments to God's people

- Leading others through a life reflecting Jesus Christ Himself.

These all contribute to fulfilling the priesthood ministry. Priesthood is a service and the first reading states it. God does not choose us because we are better than others. And the second reading reminds us that there is no boastful before God. He is the one giving the strength. And you are called to reflect His presence. How can you reflect Christ for others? The evangelical counsels can help us:

- Poverty and simple life style, to be able to be close to people, "to have the smell of the sheep" as Pope Francis said.

- Chastity is also another aspect. Examining one's relationship can help to live faithfully chastity.

- And finally, obedience to Christ through the superiors.

These are Gospel's values to help you be Christ like.

We need available people for the Service of God. Prayer should be our guide. Cardinal Lavignier was telling his first missionaries: *Be apostles, nothing but apostles.* The homily ended with these words of Lavignier.



*Continued on page 20*

## Oath and Diaconate Ordination in Kinshasa

The formation journey appears long in the eyes of those who are not in the formation system, but in the eyes of the candidates the 11 years of the missionary formation are like 11 days. This is because, the candidates in one stage of formation aspire to the next stage; that is to say, those in preparatory year are hoping to go to philosophy, those in philosophy to the novitiate etc. The different stages with different and rich experiences make the formation beautiful and interesting. However, the journey, even though interesting, has obstacles, hills and valleys, thorns or pins to step on. These are but bitter truths which we have to swallow with a frowned face. But when the candidate is able to persevere and climb the hills, endure the pricks of the thorns, he will certainly step on cotton ahead and emerge a conqueror. That was exactly the experience of our two confreres, Gabriel and Francis who have just had their missionary oath and the diaconate ordination in Kinshasa on the occasion of the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. They were ordained together with two other confreres; a Kenyan and a Burkinabe. This event was coloured by the presence of the Superior General in the person of Rev. Fr Stanley Lubungo, His Lordship the bishop of Kalemie-Kirungu, Most Rev. Bishop Christophore Aloma Amade, the provincials of SAP and PAC, and

the members of the diplomatic corps.

The whole event started on Thursday evening the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 2018 with what we call *soirée versperale*. This *soirée versperale* was meant for us to pray with our four brothers who were about to take a lifelong decision. In the course of this *soirée versperale*, each of the candidates had the opportunity to tell us a bit about his experience in the formation journey and how he feels now that he is about to make a lifelong commitment. All the experiences were rich and edifying. The next day, we accompanied our brothers to our



parish in Kisenso for the missionary oath and the diaconate ordination. The journey to Kisenso, even though tiring, it was such joy to accompany our brothers who were about to give their lives to the service of the gospel. They started with the missionary oath, after which they were ordained deacons by our confrere Most Rev. Bishop Christophore Aloma Amade. In his



Edward Akanlu Kaba

homily the bishop reiterated to the young confreres to take Mary as their role model. He made them to understand that, Mary had a project in her life and if they have decided to follow Christ as members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, their main project will be to continue with the one of our founder, Cardinal Lavigerie. To be able to realize this project they need to give priority to the following key elements; prayer life, community life, obedience, service with joy and simple life style.

We thank to God for the life of Gabriel and Francis and for expanding the missionary family with these four new confreres. We wish them all the best in their new ministry and in their journey towards the priesthood.

**Edward Akanlu Kaba**  
(Student in Theology—Kinshasa)



*Continued from page 6*

**My intellectual formation:** to constantly practice what I have learned was among my considerations in my days in the formation. I was closely acquainted with the act of studying, and the motivation to learn and re-learn prior knowledge was a significant factor as a professional teacher. My positive attitude towards studying and learning contributed to my proper understanding to my holistic formation. My learning was not only to get higher marks but to acquire the necessary knowledge that will be very useful to apply concretely in my future mission.

Recalling how I learned in my days at the philosophy house in Ejisu, as well as my formal education at College of Education, offered venues for my holistic formation intellectually. These opportunities were provided to develop my full potential intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, and socially, etc. In the philosophy house, I learned to nurture my mind with the ideas, thoughts and ways of thinking of many philosophers which I really enjoyed. In my heart, I was motivated by the ideas of St. Augustine who said "man can do other things unwillingly, but he cannot believe unless he wills. Most importantly, I learned the importance of self-reflection in the context of my experience and through commitment in the experiences presented by educators as well as the formators. My idea of my knowledge from self-reflection was motivated by that of Plato's philosophical learning theory that 'knowledge is discovered from self-reflection'. I was able to apply to a context given what I have learned and respond appropriately to the challenges I met. My philosophical studies have helped me to acquire a solid and coherent knowledge of man and society, the world and of God. My theological studies have led to my understanding of the doctrine of the Catholic Church. This is the food that nourishes my soul daily and gives me spiritual growth. With the knowledge of the Catholic doctrine, I am able to communicate to others the faith that I have in Jesus Christ in a simple

language so that the people of God can find themselves in the message of the good news.

**My pastoral formation:** In my research in following Jesus as my model, I tried as much as possible to walk in His footsteps. Through the pastoral experiences, I have learned to listen to others. My interaction with people in the place of apostolate, I acquired some values which made a difference in me, caring for the human person, and providing selfless service to others without any interest. I realized that my experience with these people give me a process of providing guided opportunities for me to produce relatively permanent change through the engagement in experiences provided by these people I met. This has encouraged me to actively participate in the cause of justice and peace for these people in my little way. At a personal level, I was called to engage in the holistic self-formation which in a process has gone to create a positive impact on me and in the society.

In the noviciate as well as during stage, I used to share the word of God and help the aged, the sick, etc to have access to the Eucharist. I came to realise that my small contribution to their spiritual nourishment was not just a merrily presence, but a presence that had a great impact on the lives of those peoples. In my theological studies in Kinshasa, I have worked with the street children for two years and I came to realise that my experiences with them gives me a joy to engage more actively and I have a preferential option for the poor and marginalised street children. My one year in the parish of St Felicity parish at Kisenso (and again where I am currently doing my diaconate ministry) with the 'Jeunes de Lumière' gave me the joy to give service to those who are in need. I equally acquired a lot from them.

**My spiritual formation:** my love for prayer started in my family grace to my father and mother, elder brothers and sisters, who used to challenge my faith about what I know of the catholic

prayers. Their challenge later became useful in my life. I am constantly seeking Christ in my daily meditation on God's word. I participate actively in the daily sacred mysteries of Eucharist as well as the liturgy of the Hours, recollections, retreats, spiritual readings, sacrament of reconciliation. I build an intimate relationship with Jesus who called me to this vocation-servant of others. My meditations and personal prayers have been my strong weapon to forge ahead despite all the challenges.

My noviciate was a very wonderful experience. It was a year of grace for me. I had enough time to have a deeper relation with Jesus. In my prayers, I present myself, my life, my worries, joy, and my motivation before God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I enter into the presence of God with a dialogue and I listen to Him so that I can respond actively to His call. Reading the Bible, spiritual readings, spiritual direction, etc were very helpful to me.

In my soul, I was nourished by my personal prayers, personal meditation, guided meditation, spiritual readings, community prayers, Eucharistic celebrations, apostolic life, etc. Our Lady of Africa has also responded to my entire prayer requests. I enjoyed the opportunities on values of formation and spiritual growth that were provided to me. Encouragement by the spiritual directors, confreres, lay people, etc has helped me so much.

In a nut shell, my years of formation were mixed feelings but what was important to me was my motivation to the charisma of Lavigerie. I stay focused on the one who called me and I let go of the hatred that I have encountered on my way. I have realised that if God really called you, no matter what men do, you will still get to your destination.

Thanks a lot; this is just a gist of it because of time factor.

**Francis Xavier Angkosaala, M.Afr**  
(Kinshasa, D.R. Congo)

*Continued from page 17*

### The Rite of Ordination

Anthony was then ordained a priest. And while he was putting on his priestly vestment his biography was being read to the whole congregation. He was then welcomed in his priestly vestment followed by the anointing of the hands. After the ordination rite, the Mass followed its normal rhythm. A high thanksgiving song was taken after communion. And the whole congregation was in move including the new priest.

The newly ordained confrère was then

sent in mission to PAO in Mali (Bandiagara) by his home Provincial.

Then followed a series of blessings done by the newly ordained priest: starting with the Bishop, the Ghana-Nigeria Provincial, his parents (father and mother), and the Provincial of PAO.

We ended the Holy Eucharist at 1:48pm. It was followed by a lunch offered in the Spiritans' community.

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December** was the day of his thanksgiving Mass in his village, Sabuli, to which we all converged for

the celebration. There we assisted at a very long thanksgiving Mass that lasted longer than the Ordination Ceremony itself.

Fr. Anthony was offered a motorcycle by his uncles at the end of the celebration, and many more gifts from his friends and relatives. Solidarity among the Dagaabas was not to be guessed again but; it was a fact. We had our lunch around 3pm after which the first convoys started leaving the place.

**Ephraim Konkobo**  
(Stagiaire in Savelugu, Ghana)



*Continued from page 11*

Communities enjoy active and committed stagiaires to community, spiritual and pastoral life. In that regards many stagiaires showed the zeal that sometimes is lacking in the community. I would say that to have stagiaires in my community has been a chance and a challenge. By their zeal and commitment to their vocation, they keep many areas of our charism on high. It is however difficult to make transition from one stagiaire who at

certain moment relate and fit in the system very well to the new comer who comes with his fragility, qualities, limitations and challenges to help him to get integrated into the system. The danger of comparison is somehow unavoidable but it has always been possible to readjust the attitude to the new stagiaire since the system is rather stable.

In conclusion, as one of the formators at this phase of formation of our candidates, I still feel that the stage is

a very sweet moment of formation but it can be tough. All formators at this stage need to acknowledge their contribution in the formation, caution themselves and help the candidates realistically to discern their vocations and help the congregation to make the right discernment according to the will of God through their honesty, dedication and love of God.

**Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr**  
(Ibadan, Nigeria)

## Renewal of Declaration of Intent of Félix Kiboba wa Kabwe Arsène Axel

Any celebration in the Church is an account of God's goodness. It is an explication of beneficence, and a manifestation of God's goodness to humanity. Yet another celebration it was, on Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> day of December 2017, that one of us, in the Nigeria Sector, took a step forward in formation. With the invitatory words of the Rejoice Sunday "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord..." as in the prophet Isaiah 61: 10, Felix KIBOBA WA KABWE Arsene, a student on apostolic training (Stage) renewed his declaration of intent. It was in the presence of Fr. Robert CHIPUMBU, Mafr, who received his declaration on behalf of the Provincial Superior of the Ghana/Nigeria Province. It was at the glare of the entire faithful of St. Thomas Catholic Church, Agbowo, that Felix made his renewal; A deeply personal moment for he who had to publicly pronounce his commitment to continuing his formation with the Missionaries of Africa.

In what was an important rite, within a simple and normal Sunday celebration, yet an experience of great depth and of sublime significance, the celebrated kneeling before Lord and Fr. Robert CHIPUMBU personally expressed his intention to continue formation. In his own words "...I, Felix KIBOBA WA KABWE Arsene, do freely renew my intention to continue formation with the Missionaries of Africa, in view of eventually taking the perpetual oath in our Society..." Felix made a journey! Sequentially to the chanting of the Sancta Maria, a Song of the society that implores the help of our ever loving mother; Immaculate Virgin Mary, Kiboba signed his declaration while Fr. Robert signed on the behalf of the Society. Felix, then after the Eucharistic celebration, with joy and in a spirit of jubilation shared pleasantries with the faithful who congratulated him upon the step made. A blissful moment it was that the confreres present and the

parishioners acknowledged the work that God is accomplishing in this young man who, willfully, is offering himself into the vineyard of the Lord. The event finally climaxed with a dinner that brought together confreres from the neighboring community of St. Clement Formation house and St. Thomas community. In his address, while dining, Felix shared his experience, so far, in the sector; "it has been a fruitful experience" he summed. He was very passionate while expressing how much he has grown. And he couldn't conclude without being appreciative of the Society, the confreres and of his fellow students on stage in the sector. Fr. Emmanuel MAMBWE, the Sector Delegate, and rest of the confreres then applauded the celebrated for his undaunted service as student in formation.

**Nicholas Iwuala**  
(Stagiaire in Ibadan, Nigeria)

C A R D I N A L	<p style="text-align: center;">“The initial need of an emerging mission is the training of clergy capable of bringing the work of the apostolate to fruition. (...) From the outset, from early October 1868, six young clerics, two of where priests, responded to this initial appeal. I brought them together in the one house and explained the problems and the importance of their mission to them. I also spoke to them of the reasons for the complete failure, in my opinion, of the Catholic apostolate towards the Muslims. In agreement with them we mapped out the first rules of their little society. The main guidelines are the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They will form a society of missionaries intended solely for the apostolate among Muslim Arabs of Africa.</li> <li>2. They will live in community and will always be three together</li> <li>3. From seminary, the novitiate, they will adopt the food, language, attire, and sleeping habits of the Arabs.</li> <li>4. They will learn enough about medicine to treat sick people.”</li> </ol>	L A V I G E R I E
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## Leaving Africa with a Grateful Heart



On the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the year, we had the grace to read again the first words written in the New Testament. It is nicely put how the Love of God in his own way choosing the Thessalonians, managed to send Paul to them, closing and opening doors, until he found himself where he should be. In Thessalonica Paul proclaimed the Word with power from on high, as it came from the Spirit and with enthusiasm as he was so full of it (*pleroforia*). And the Thessalonians received it not as some human doctrine but as coming from on high, riming with meaning in their lives tribulations with joy. Becoming mimes of Paul, so that as the Word had passed from Christ to Paul and from Paul to the Thessalonians it will continue now from Thessalonica to Macedonia, from Macedonia to Achaia and to the end of the ends.

This can be remembered, represented and relived again and again finding gratitude and gratefulness while processing the past experiences. And find a way of keeping Faith energetic, Hope resilient, Love stronger than pain.

One of the editors of the *Ghana-Nigeria Link* asked me to share with you my way of leaving Ghana after almost five years; Africa almost 49 years from the evening I first landed in Dar Es Salaam. Well those words of



*Jesus Mary Velasco, M.Afr. with the workers during his farewell party*

the first letter to the Thessalonians help me to interpret and find the red thread of my being and acting in Africa as elsewhere. Africa, as of late, Ghana has provided for me structures where to live and carry the Word.

The liturgy of the 29<sup>th</sup> Sunday showed how the people of God had to live their Election in different structures, more or less foreign, more or less friendly, Persia or Rome. None of them to be idolized, all to be seen as a gift and an opportunity in the long run to live and carry out the vocation to be apostles of the Gospel.

Cardinal Martini wrote at the end of his life, that of all his apostolic activities certainly the sharing the Word of God

in retreats with the Ignatian method of the Exercises, was the most true and meaningful. My time in Kumasi for almost five years has been dedicated to that service, sometimes accompanying members of our society. I find it a meaningful service and I feel grateful for it. It felt good to meet again some of the known confreres, especially from old times in London and Jerusalem.

Nevertheless the fact that I arrived in the country when well on in years, and the circumstances where I was living, rather isolated, have made my time in Ghana a rather restricted endeavour. Naturally my limits and my sins have also contributed to the imperfection and incompleteness of my passing here. I had to fight often with the demons of shame and negativity. But that prepared for me an occupation for the Sabbatical Year which I will begin at the occasion of my 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Priesthood.

As a whole, it has been a time of grace, even if I have not yet processed it all into the Grace that I guess it was. I go therefore with a grateful heart. Best Wishes to all!

**Jesus Maria Velasco, M.Afr**



# TOWARDS the 150th ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FOUNDATION:

1868/69—2018/19

The third and last preparatory year started from 9th December 2017 under the theme:

LIVING  
THE FUTURE  
WITH HOPE.



Extract from a letter of the two Superiors General of the Lavigerie family proposing a common recollection between the M.Afr. and the MSOLA for the 30th April 2018.

### “Looking to the future with hope”

In a meeting with youth on Palm Sunday 2013, Pope Francis said: “We follow Jesus, but above all we know that he accompanies us and carries us on his shoulders. This is our joy, this is the hope that we must bring to this world. Please do not let yourselves be robbed of hope, do not let hope be stolen, the hope that Jesus gives us.”

To meditate on hope, we will let ourselves be inspired by the episode of the healing of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22-43).

“Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup>He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”<sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him.”

Here, we see Jairus, a leader, imploring Jesus with all his might to do something for his daughter. He loves his “little daughter” as he calls her. Here, a father’s heart is broken at the thought of what might happen to his daughter. Yet he continues to hope, and his last hope is Jesus. At this moment, for Jairus, hope is a “powerful resource, both a gift to be received and a choice to be made in freedom and put into practice.” At a moment when the future is more than uncertain, he receives the gift of hope and he chooses to act from it. “So Jesus went with him.” Jesus accompanies Jairus in his inner journey of both anguish and hope. They walk side by side.

Let us pause a moment to reflect. If in the place of Jairus, we put Cardinal Lavigerie and Mother Marie Salomé, what would they plead for today as they look at our Institutes, as they look at Africa and at our world? What would they hope for?

In a second moment, I place myself in the place of Jairus. What breaks my heart? What hope do I carry, that I want to place at the feet of Jesus? Where and how do I see Jesus accompanying me on my journey of anguish and of hope?

Mark 5:25-34 is a text that interrupts the story and it serves to highlight the faith and hope that Jairus needed to have, to continue to trust in Jesus. Jesus gets involved in the healing of the bleeding woman. Jairus may have thought: “Is he not wasting precious time? Will we make it while my daughter was still alive?” How can he keep hope alive? How can we not let ourselves be robbed of hope when faced with difficulties and sufferings? (...)

Your sister and brother in Christ and in Cardinal Lavigerie,  
Sr. Carmen Sammut, MSOLA and Fr. Stanley Lubungo M.Afr

(Full text on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B127s3GtHfw3ckdLS25MQXN6OVRNN241amhIZDI3NzJVTW5V/view>)

CHUCKLE

### “FOUR MOTHERS HAVING LUNCH.

**MOTHER 1: MY SON IS A PRIEST. WHEN HE ENTERS THE CHURCH, EVERYONE SAYS, GOOD MORNING FATHER. (AND SHE’S VERY PROUD)**

**MOTHER 2: MY SON IS A BISHOP; EVERYONE SAYS, GOOD MORNING YOUR EXCELLENCY. (AND SHE’S VERY VERY PROUD)**

**MOTHER 3: MY SON IS A CARDINAL; AND EVERYONE SAYS GOOD MORNING YOUR EMINENCE (AND SHE’S EXTREMELY PROUD).**

ALL 3 LOOK AT MOTHER 4 AND SEE WHAT SHE HAS TO SAY.

**MOTHER 4: OH, MY SON IS NOT A PRIEST. HE’S JUST A LAY MAN. AND HE’S 350 POUNDS & 7 FOOT 6. AND WHEN HE ENTERS THE CHURCH, EVERYONE SAYS, OH MY GOD!!!”** (<http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?cat=47>)

# Blessed Holy Week and Glorious Easter

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
**Ghana-Nigeria Link**  
SPECIAL ISSUE  
DECEMBER 2017

**THE 28<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER BROUGHT HOME:**  
Ghana-Nigeria Confers Meet for the Post-Capitular Assembly in Tamale

**Editorial**  
A few months after a certain Chapter of a particular Congregation, the Captulants were called to attend a recollection. At the end of the recollection they were all amazed and inspired by the preacher. They then asked the preacher: what was the inspiration for this wonderful recollection? He answered: "I was inspired by your recent Capitular Acts".

The "Appreciative Discernment" method is the backbone of the unfolding of the 28th General Chapter. The General Chapter and the Post-Capitular Assembly are a journey with the Lord. This method has never been heard of before. We are happy to have a recollection book for the coming year. As we go on a journey with the Lord, we are happy to have a recollection book for the coming year. As we go on a journey with the Lord, we are happy to have a recollection book for the coming year.

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20. From the Editor (Frank Driessens)

What is the meaning of the following Yoruba proverb?  
*Lo karo ka di ijo si.*  
(Literal translation: One tree cannot make a forest.)

Think twice before you print our page papers, save ink, save energy!

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
**Ghana-Nigeria Link**  
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1  
JANUARY - MARCH 2017

**ON COMMUNITY LIFE AND MISSION:**  
13 Communities in Ghana-Nigeria Sharing in the Same Prophetic Mission

**Editorial**  
We are happy to bring to you the Ghana-Nigeria Link of the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of the Year 2017. May the Lenten observances be fruitful in our lives and lead us all to the joy of Resurrection.

We are grateful to all conferees who sent us their reflections. We thank you who are grateful to your effort of evangelization through the written means reaching out to many people in all continents. So to say, your missionary experience written in New York in Provinces within fractions of a second. That is the power of the media which has become part and parcel of instruments of evangelization.

The Ghana-Nigeria Link started sometime in 2012, but for some reasons it stopped for some years. Given the difficulty to trace faithfully the previous publications, we propose to our readers to start again the numbering of the year. Each publication will carry two specifications: the quarter and the year. Thus starting from last year, the current publication will be identified as Volume 2, Issue 1 which means respectively the second year of publication, and the first quarter of the year.

The topic for this issue is "community life and mission". Quality of life or means respectively the second year of publication, and the first quarter of the year.

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Think twice before you print our page papers, save ink, save energy!

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
**Ghana-Nigeria Link**  
DOUBLE ISSUE  
OCTOBER 1 - MARCH 2018

**AN EYE ON OUR INITIAL FORMATION:**  
With Special Lenses of Six New Conferees from Ghana-Nigeria Province

**Editorial**  
"My mom is the best cook in the world!" We would even say more: she is the bestest cook! 150 years after the foundation of our Society and the opening of our first novitiate as Missionaries of Africa in 1868, we remain grateful for the formation system which has been handed down from one generation to another and always opened to the signs of time.

The pot in which the Missionaries of Africa are cooked in, is being praised in this issue of the Ghana-Nigeria Link by a number of conferees especially the six new conferees from our province. Indeed one does not need to taste the dishes from other kitchens to praise the deliciously one prepared and enjoyed at home. Our founder, Cardinal Lavigne, had a dream when he entrusted the first novitiate to a Jesuit priest. He wanted "spices", "sauce", "warming-stock" malleable in the hand of an old person in view of being of service at all times.

Cooked in this pot for not less than ten years, our six new conferees are sharing about their experiences in the initial formation described as holistic, which started in Nigeria then Ghana for their first phase before being exposed to the internationally and interculturally mostly experienced in the second, third and fourth phases of their formation. They did not cover up the dark side of the pot as they recognized the pains and difficulties encountered not necessarily with the formation system but with human resources. The stories of their faith and diocesan ordinations by our candidates who are in formation are a witness of the joy experienced in our formation. The above echoes therefore the call during this third and last year of preparation to celebrate the sesquicentennial of our foundation under the theme: "Living the Future with hope".

We all have a role to play in bringing the firewood needed in the kitchen of our "room" and in helping her washing the cooking pots. Thus the 2018 Chapter invited us to improve on the essential link of our initial formation by the choice of formators and the smooth transition of candidates from one phase of formation to the next in order to form missionary disciples according to the heart of Jesus so that they may have a preferential love for the poor (CA, 451). Our hope is that our initial formators will continue to cook us into disciplined disciples following in the footsteps of the Lamb of God, the good shepherd who lays down His life for us. Dying with him this Holy Week, may we live with him at Easter as true witnesses.

Serge Boreto Zhalawa, M.Afr.

What is the meaning of the following Yoruba proverb?  
*Sukurun daadun ya san ki i ko.*  
(Literal translation: It is the patient person who cooks a stone and it is cooked.)

Think twice before you print our page papers, save ink, save energy!

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
**Ghana-Nigeria Link**  
VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2  
APRIL - JUNE 2017

**OUR LENTEN AND EASTER EXPERIENCES:**  
We Are Always Apostles of the Christ Event

**Editorial**  
Dear Conferees, Church provides us with a precious time of Lent to prepare us for Easter Celebration. During Lent, we are called to repentance, receiving and offering forgiveness with genuine hearts. We remember that God loves and saves us in a special way. Lent offers us an ample time to prepare us for Easter Celebration. During Lent, we are called to repentance, receiving and offering forgiveness with genuine hearts. We remember that God loves and saves us in a special way. Lent offers us an ample time to prepare us for Easter Celebration.

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VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3  
JULY - SEPTEMBER 2017

**OUR COMMITMENTS TOWARDS JPIC-ED:**  
Faithfulness to the Gospel and Our Charism

**Editorial**  
Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation, and Encounter and Dialogue (JPIC-ED) will continue shining in God's mission, entrusted to us, as we strive to live these aspects in our communities and at a very personal level. If we want to live these aspects in our communities and at a very personal level. If we want to live these aspects in our communities and at a very personal level.

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