



MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA
Ghana-Nigeria Link



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OUR LENTEN AND EASTER EXPERIENCES:

We Are Always Apostles of the Christ Event

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Priestly Ordinations

Editorial

Dear Confreres,

Every year, the 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 assures us that however grave our sins are, however shameful our deeds are, He is ready to forgive us. In a special way, Lent offers an ample time to receive God's forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is this sacrament that helps us renew our relationship with God and with one another.

Reconciliation is not something abstract. It is real and we need it. Getting reconciled with one another remains a prerequisite to harmony in Africa and the world at large. We continue to experience all kinds of conflicts and divisions which make us fear one another. We lose our mutual trust and allow ourselves to be guided by prejudices and suspicion. The time of Lent is a time we are to overcome such social ills in order to rise to new life with Christ on Easter—the day of his resurrection.

Christ's resurrection gives new meaning to life and death. Whereas the world sees death as the end of life, for us Christians it is the beginning of new life in its fullness. We ought not to fear death. Christ's death on the cross became a gateway to the fullness of life. Our faithful departed are not being held by the power of death, but rather enjoying a full communion with Christ. It is the same communion our confrere Br. Victor Derry has joined. We believe that he is not gone forever. We shall be re-united with him for through Christ, our life and death have new meaning. However, this is a language that can only be accepted by those who believe.

The communion with Christ is not something of eschatological time. It should start here and now. Why can't start now? Why can't we unite? We, contemporary missionaries, ought to foster this communion wherever we are. Easter joy would not make sense if we are divided. Easter would not make sense if we refrain from empowering the less privileged and marginalized of our parishes.

On the behalf of *Ghana-Nigeria Link* editorial team, I wish you a happy reading. It is with our sincere hope that our shared experiences will add value to our daily missionary apostolate.

'Be apostles, nothing but apostles!'

Prosper Harelimana, M.Afr

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE FOLLOWING PROVERB IN DAGBANI?

Ban kpe narima di lari kpimba.

(Literal translation: Those in the canoe should not laugh at the dead.)

Ghana-Nigeria Link is a newsletter of the Ghana – Nigeria Province of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa
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Think twice before you print me: save papers, save ink, save energy!

Provincial's Word:

Gratitude of Serving and Lenten Experience at St. Joseph Parish, Soe

T

his will be the last time that I am writing in this column of our provincial Link. I would therefore like to take this golden opportunity to thank all of you, for the opportunity you gave me to serve you during these six years (2011-2017). They have been years of fantastic experience of growth for me. I thank each one of you for the very good collaboration, and for accepting me even with my limits. In a few days time I will be handing over to John Aserbire. I would like to thank him for accepting to serve us. I pray that you will all collaborate with him, as you did to me and even more.

The media team has proposed that this issue of the Link should be on our Lenten experience. I cannot say this year's lent was any different from the others. However, I had an experience which I think I will never forget. It was at St Joseph Parish, Soe, Bolgatanga.



*Dominic Apee, M.Afr,
Outgoing Provincial Superior*

There was a long standing conflict in the parish. The Bishop then asked them to work towards reconciliation and peace. So the Christian together with their pastors; our confreres, decided to have a ceremony of reconciliation during the liturgical celebration of GOOD FRIDAY. The liturgy started normally, then after the Homily which I gave, came the

ceremony of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation. A cross section of people was given the opportunity to say what hurt them, and how their action also hurt others. It was very emotional as people poured out their hurts. All these discourses finished with a request for forgiveness and also granting forgiveness to all. For the kiss of peace, people went all over the church embracing each other. One could see the joy and relief in the faces of all. It appeared to me; Good Friday live: Christ died to reconcile us to God and each other.

Once more, thanks so much to all of you for your love and support you showed me. I have not yet been told where I will be going next, however, for now, I need a good and prayerful rest.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

Dominic Apee, M.Afr
(Tamale, Ghana)

Appointments of new Provincials

After consultation of the confreres appointed to and coming from the Provinces concerned, after having duly consulted the members of the General Council and after having obtained the agreement of the four confreres concerned, the Superior General, Fr. Stanley Lubungo, has made the following appointments:

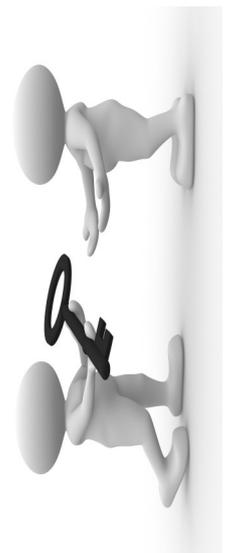
- **Gérard CHABANON** as Provincial Superior of the Province of Europe (PEP).
- **Emmanuel NGONA** as Provincial Superior of the Province of Central Africa (PAC).
- **John ASERBIRE** as Provincial Superior of the Province of Ghana-Nigeria (GhN).
- **Anselme TARPAGA** as Provincial Superior of the Province of Maghreb (Mgh).

All these appointments are for a first mandate from 01st July 2017 till 30th June 2020.

Rome, 11-04-2017

André Schaminée
Secretary General

(<https://mafrome.org/appointments-of-new-provincials/>)



Who Is Our New Provincial?

A Self-Presentation to the Ghana-Nigeria Link

I am John Azure Aserbire, born on the 19th April 1961 at Bongo to a family of eight children; 4 boys and 4 girls. I am the third born. My father was a catechist (died in 2008) and my mother a house wife (died in 2010). My father hails from Zoko – Goo but we settled in Bongo after his retirement. I was brought up in a family that upheld Christian values and discipline. Our family house (Catechist house), was very close to the Church and was open to people who came around the Parish. We received all types of people; relatives, neighbours, strangers, the poor and at times the mentally challenged who came seeking water or shelter. My parents always told us that strangers are God sent and we should welcome those in need. We never lacked people around our family. At times, the family hosted neighbours who come for chats or story telling in family.

I did my primary education at Bongo and my secondary school education at Notre Dame Minor Seminary in Navrongo from 1977 to 1982. I started thinking seriously of becoming a priest at that moment. After my Ordinary level examination, I continued to Bawku secondary school for the (High School) Advance level studies completing in 1984. I applied to join the Missionaries

of Africa. In the meantime, I got employed at the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development in Bolgatanga for my National service. I worked mainly in the

villages around Bongo for a year. My communication with the vocations director was not regular due to my busy schedules, so he proposed a job that would permit me to be engaged in parish activities, in accompaniment and correspondences. Actually, I got a



*John Aserbire, M.Afr.,
New Provincial Superior*

teaching job in 1985 at a junior secondary school, and followed the directives of the vocations director.

In 1986, I was accepted and I did two years of Philosophy at St. Victor's Major Seminary in Tamale. Then, I continued to Fribourg, Switzerland for the Spiritual year in 1988.

I was appointed to Ruhuha Parish, Rwanda in 1989 for stage and in 1991 to our formation house in Toulouse, France for Theology at the Catholic Institute. I made my Oath and was Ordained Deacon at Sept-Deniers Parish in Toulouse in December 1993. In Feb. 1994, I got my appointment to Rwanda. I was happy. Unfortunately, war broke out there in April 1994 and I couldn't go to Rwanda.

OUR FAMILY HOUSE (CATECHIST HOUSE), WAS VERY CLOSE TO THE CHURCH AND WAS OPEN TO PEOPLE WHO CAME AROUND THE PARISH. WE RECEIVED ALL TYPES OF PEOPLE; RELATIVES, NEIGHBOURS, STRANGERS, THE POOR AND AT TIMES THE MENTALLY CHALLENGED WHO CAME SEEKING WATER OR SHELTER. MY PARENTS ALWAYS TOLD US THAT STRANGERS ARE GOD SENT AND WE SHOULD WELCOME THOSE IN NEED. WE NEVER LACKED PEOPLE AROUND OUR FAMILY.

I was ordained at Bolgatanga on the 6th August 1994 and got a new appointment to Bukoli Parish, Diocese of Geita, in Tanzania. I arrived at Tabora on the 3rd February 1995 for two months of Kiswahili course. The course had started in October 1994

but my visa was not ready. I finally got to Bukoli Parish mid-April 1995. The Parish was established in 1993 with over forty outstations. Primary evangelization was the main task in the parish as well as interreligious dialogue due to the settlement of Arab Muslims in the area. The community was made up of three confreres; Jan Dekkers (PP), Bernard Vulkkers and myself. I had replaced Clement Alekwe who was one of the (pioneers) founding confreres of the parish. I served as curate for three years and was made parish priest in 1998. I was also a member of the Provincial council. We handed over the parish to the local clergy in June 2002 and in September; I went to Dublin, Ireland for a course on Religious Formation Ministry. Afterwards, I was appointed to Arusha Philosophy Centre as formator and bursar. I was in Arusha from 2003 to 2010.

In September 2010, I went to Brussels, Belgium for a sabbatical. I did a year course in Catechetics and Pastoral Theology at the Lumen Vitae International Institute run by the Jesuits. In 2011, I was appointed to Tandale Parish in Dar es Salaam for a period of two years because I was called for home service in 2013. This arrangement was cut short in September 2012, when I was appointed Assistant Provincial of the Eastern Africa Province (EAP).

My five years of service as Assistant Provincial is ending soon. EAP became a Mega Province (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan) during our mandate of service. A new reality with its challenges, but also its richness. I learned a lot from the challenges and I found great joy in serving. Another task is waiting for me in Ghana/Nigeria Province. It is my prayer and hope that with the love and support of my brothers we shall all do our best for the welfare of the Province and the Society at large.

John Aserbire, M.Afr
(Nairobi, Kenya)

My Tour in Ghana, Togo and Nigeria

Dear confreres,

My tour in Ghana, Togo and Nigeria, from the end of March to the beginning of May, has no doubt been for me a memorable one filled with so many discoveries and opportunities to meet you all and better understand the situations and challenges you are facing. It was also clear to me that our present ministry is reaping the fruits of the missionary labour of our predecessors and yet there is still so much to bear witness to and countless ways of sowing the Good News of our Lord through our words and actions. Thus, I am so grateful to Dominic Apee and Luc Kola for having planned so well my journey and to all of you for the great hospitality you offered me wherever I have been.

This said, I now wish to share with you three elements that I have found so helpful in helping me to better understand on how to maintain a good level of motivation or enthusiasm in our ministry. In fact, these three elements can be applied to anyone whatever his vocation or profession may be. They are three points that we need to pay attention to wherever we may be or at whatever period of our lives we may be sailing through. I came across these three while reading an article from two of my former teachers in Bangalore – India, namely Fr Jose Parappully and Fr Joe

Mannath. Both are Salesians of Don Bosco and are much involved in fostering the emotional well-being of the religious in India. What I now share with you is taken from one of their joint articles published in a Jesuit periodical named: “Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflections” in volume 73/4 of April 2009 from pp. 274-293.

Basically, the two authors point out the importance to maintain throughout our lives an adequate level of competence, relatedness and autonomy. These three elements are referred to as basic psychological needs that required to be satisfied throughout our life span in order to experience health and well-being.

As for competence, it is easy to see that all our studies in philosophy and theology have led us to reach a good level of competence in this particular field. It is also obvious that competence cannot be in all things and that the competence we have acquired demands to be maintained or updated in so many different ways requiring that we keep the interest and the readiness to read on the given subject. Being competent in a particular field also helps us to realise that we are simply not competent in other subjects and thus appreciate the competence others have. In that way we are then in a position to offer and to receive with appreciation.

The second element is relatedness. Indeed, no man is an island. We need others to live and no doubt that our community life caters for this need as long as we get along and give ourselves the means of getting along through our community prayer and sharing. But there again, we relate with so many people in our ministry, as friends, as collaborators, either directly or through correspondence or virtually. Yet our community living nonetheless remains a corner stone. The Chapter 2 of our Constitutions and Laws has much suggest on this point. It is my



*Martin Grenier, M.Afr
General Assistant*

hope that our regular community meetings or recollections be occasions of strengthening our bond. But of course relatedness goes much further, it makes us go towards others or as it is said in CL 4 it makes us live, among the people of the African world, our vocation and our apostolic project: to be witnesses of the Kingdom and to share with those willing to receive it, the grace of the Good News.

The third element is autonomy. On this, the two authors say: “It is the ability to stand on one’s own feet, makes one’s own decisions without undue pressure or fear. It supposes a setting where thinking and personal responsibility are not just tolerated, but encouraged” (p. 279). Basically, it is a matter of trusting one another and of having the spontaneity to inform the confreres on how things went on in a particular situation and of taking into account their viewpoints. In brief it is the readiness to delegate, the readiness to take on a challenge with both hands and the interest to seek together how best we can live our missionary vocation.

There would be much more to say, but kindly allow me to leave it here. However, if you wish to glance through that article, I encourage you to do so. I still find it much enlightening and challenging.

United in the same Mission

Martin Grenier, M.Afr (Rome)



Martin, sharing water, after he skillfully helped the youths from Bunkpurugu to tie their punctured motorbike.

I Was in Prison and You Came to Visit Me:

The Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of St. Vincent de Paul Parish Osogbo Visits Ilesa Prison

Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation, Encounter and Dialogue are among the priorities of the Missionaries of Africa. The above reality is evident at the societal level. Each Province, each Sector and Section and communities apply it in specific contexts. In some areas the emphasis is on Justice and Peace while in others the focus is on Encounter and Dialogue. In the Nigeria Sector, while we try to embrace everything, it is clear that much more attention is given to Justice and Peace, with particular attention to the integrity of Creation. All 3 MAfr communities still remaining in Nigeria are based either in Ibadan Archdiocese or Osogbo diocese. In some Parishes of Ibadan Archdiocese, there are some Justice and Peace Commissions created with the help of our confrere James Ngahy, while in Osogbo diocese, this commission operates from the Diocesan office called JDPMC (Justice, Development Peace Maker Centre). The only Parish-based group is found in our Parish Saint Vincent de Paul. The group is still at its initial stage but its impact is increasing with time. It was in this perspective that its members decided to reach out to prisoners as part of their Lenten and Easter celebrations.

Lent and Easter 2017 were special for parishioners because St Vincent de Paul Parish Ogo-Oluwa visited them at Ilesa Prisons

for the first time, through initiative of the Justice, Peace and Development Committee. The aim was to put into practice the word of the Master: "I was in prison and you visited me". Being the first time, the preparation was not easy at all. Everything was discovered gradually as the time passed on. Ilesa prison is one of the two central prisons of Osun State in Nigeria. It is situated

at about 20 km from Osogbo, the Capital city of Osun State.

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION

The Catholic Diocese of Osogbo has a pastoral commission in charge of prison apostolate. The chaplain of the commission has good relationships with the prison officers and the prisoners. In order to go there, we needed to ask him for requirements. According to him, there was no special requirement apart from booking a date beforehand. The JDPC of the Parish wanted to share whatever was contributed from members and from the Parishioners with inmates of the prison. We were struck when the chaplain told us that the prison had about 700 inmates, males and females. One lady prisoner just put to birth about two weeks before our visit. Therefore the chaplain advised us to buy things that could easily be distributed to all prisoners in order to

supposed to be 10am, but the provisions to be taken along were not ready yet. Among other reasons for the delay, the last contribution reached the JDPC a few minutes before starting off the journey. After all the hardships, of shopping, a bad road and a road block caused by a fuel truck that fell on the road, we finally reached the prison around 1.00pm. One the members of prisons apostolate commission, Mr Augustine, led us and pleaded with them to allow us go in just for a while, because we arrived very late. The high ranked officer on duty explained to us that inmates were already all back in their cells, but she accepted to allow see a just few, about 50 of them who came to meet us. After a serious check up, we were immediately led to the prison's chapel, donated by Redeemed Christian Church.

CONTACT WITH INMATES: FACTS AND FEELINGS

There is very tight and strict security around the prison. As soon as the last member entered the compound the heavy gate was closed behind us. No phones, no cameras nor taking of pictures are allowed within the premises of the prison. Even taking a picture at the entrance of the Prison was strictly forbidden. As we left the gate towards the chapel, we were given

identification tags and the officers who were leading us instructed us to keep moving, no stopping despite the fact that inmates were already in their cells. We reached the Chapel before them and we were instructed to sit at the front (right wing) while one of the officers sat in front of us.



Gilbert (fourth from left) with the stagiaire Dominic Abiriga (second from right) and members of JDPC.

hasten and ease the distribution. He added on a special note, by insisting that we should get some items that could be useful for feeding and caring for the new born baby.

IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

The day fixed for the visitation was May 1st, it was threatening to rain that day. The departure time was

Continued on page 7

Lenten and Easter Experiences at St. Clement House Ibadan

This year's Lenten and Easter experiences as we lived them in our Formation house set-up can be summarized with the amazing story of the Disciples of Emmaus Luke 24:13-35. I am always intrigued by this story- It was Easter morning, and the two disciples were walking sluggishly back to their home town, very frightened and discouraged. Then Jesus came walking along the slow and painful journey of wisdom with them.

We here in St Clement house are grateful to God for 10 solid young men who arrived here in September 2016 to start that journey of trying to discover ways to answer the call to become Missionaries of Africa one day. During the four weeks leading to Easter, we their Formators focused on inviting them to look up to Christ and to graft their lives on Him. He is walking with them along a similar journey as he did with the disciples of Emmaus, a journey of self discovery. He is doing it through us their Formators, who are accompanying them in a discreet, patient and diligent manner. The Lord Jesus invites them to tell their story, with its many ups and downs, hopes, often dashed etc., he listens in respectful silence. What a great teacher! Now in tune with their experience, he takes up the dialogue, showing them that the scripture is not complete until it is experienced in the reality of their lives. What seemed senseless to them at first slowly becomes meaningful to them. What the Lord taught them on the road becomes reality in the context of a Community meal, Eucharist! As a result of this encounter with Jesus, and the wisdom the disciples gained, they are able to return to their brothers and sisters with a new heart. This is exactly the kind of experience that we the Formators and our students went through during the Lenten season leading on to Easter. I have asked one or two student to share their experience and here are some.

From David Gyang: Lent is always a time for inner reflection, a time to set ourselves free from self-indulges so as

to live more fully and discover the joy which Christ has promised to give to his followers. Our Lenten experience in St Clement Formation House Ibadan was a spirit filled one. It was filled with both spiritual and practical activities. It was indeed a time for us to make a balance between our spiritual, community and academic lives.

We started with a recollection to usher us into the season of lent. The recollection was conducted by Fr. Robert Chipumbu, and the title of the recollection was "My Lenten journey: How far.....so far." He talked about how we as Christians are supposed to reflect about our past, and try to correct the mistakes of the past, by not repeating the same ugly actions in the life we live at present so that we could be able to enjoy the gifts of the Resurrection. After the talk, we had confession and counseling sessions which helped us indeed in our discernment journey.

We all went to the Dominican Institute to attend penitential services for the season of lent. During these services, prayers were said, spiritual talks were given by different priests and above all, the sacrament of penance was offered to us students from different congregations. Similarly, back at our own formation house, we were encouraged by our Formators to make it a habit so see our spiritual director for spiritual direction regularly during the time of Lent. Also we were admonished to always go for confession as much as we can, and to exhibit good moral virtues as Christians and as Postulants. Not only did we carry out spiritual activities, we also carried out apostolate activities. Because Lent is a time for sharing with the less privileged, we felt the disposition to partake also in propagating the Word not just by words but also by actions. We put up a charity box where people could drop things like: clothes, books, money



Andrew with some students of St. Clement House

shoes etc. We then collected these items at the end of the Lenten season and gave them to the needy. Likewise, we usually go to the home of the poor and the needy at Ile-Alafeya in Ibadan where we help the Pauline Sisters to take care of the poor and the needy. This time around we were more spirit filled, more enthusiastic about it. The Lenten season gave us the opportunity to serve God and humanity in our own little ways.

All these activities came to a climax on Easter Sunday when we were back home with our families in our respective parishes. Some of us were privileged to bring along a Ghanaian colleague to spend the short Easter break with our families. Christ is Risen indeed. We were very happy that we did indeed partake in this mystery. We felt the joy in our hearts, because we knew that we had done the little we could. However, we did not just do these on our own. Our Formators guided us spiritually and morally and provided us with the means that made our experiences very positive and fruitful. This year's Lenten experience has opened our eyes to the realities of life and it has showed us how God can use us to bring joy to the faces of the poor and the needy. And the lesson that I learnt was that all of us are in constant need of the mercy of God. The Lenten season was indeed a rich experience for all of us in the Formation house.

Andrew Anab, M.Afr & David Gyang
(Ibadan, Nigeria)

Let Us Share with the *Link!*

In Our Lady of Hope Parish, Bunkpurugu, about 427 catechumens were baptised in their respective zones at the Easter Vigil of 2017. The catechumens came from among the 32 outstations, which constitute the four zones of the parish. We, priests in the parish, had to conduct some kind of interrogations or interviews in all the zones to evaluate the readiness of the catechumens. Among them, we had a huge number of married women. This led us to encounter and examine some cases related to marriage. For a 'newly

ordained' priest, with zero experience, I had to run back to some pages of canon law, which did not help me much. I then shared some of the cases I encountered with the confreres, and at the end, I left the matter in the hands of the parish priest. Below, I am sharing succinctly two cases, both concerning polygamy (bigamy):

The first case concerns two women (first and second wife) traditionally married and living with their husband, a non-believer.

The second case is about two women (first and second wife) traditionally married and living with their husband, a lapsed baptised catholic.

Please share with the *Ghana-Nigeria Link* how you would handle these cases in order to admit these women to the sacrament of Baptism.

You may send your reactions to: sergeborotoz@yahoo.com

Serge Boroto Zihahirwa, M.Afr
(Bunkpurugu, Ghana)

Continued from page 5

Upon their arrival, some of the prisoners started to set-up the sound system while others set-up music instruments like drums, keyboard, etc., and started to sing Christian choruses. Some of them had their Bibles. All our plans made in view of interacting with them were reduced to nothing. Being the only priest with the group, I was asked to lead the prayer and give a word of encouragement. Thanks to the Holy Spirit all went on well even if I had no Bible. As I preached in English, one of the inmates translated my word directly into Yoruba language for everyone. No doubt the young man is gifted, but he is locked up in a prison!

We didn't have any opportunity to talk to any of the prisoners apart from my preaching for them from the pulpit. We spent only about 30 minutes with them. As we were about leaving, the

female warder informed them that we brought some items to be distributed among them. She expressed her gratitude on their behalf and they also showed their appreciation with spontaneous applauds. Then we were instructed to move fast back to the gate where we had received the tags. All JDPC members were happy to have visited the prisons but they were sad because of what they experienced.

The majority of those we met were teenagers. When I asked one of the Youth who accompanied us about his feelings, he answered "I am very sad". Another member, a lady wrote: "*Home sweet home: an adage says nothing tastes like mother's food. In fact, I was in a melancholic mood. We parents have to advice our children, even those that are not our biological children. The adage says if you see a cock eating waste, pursue it, nobody*

knows who will eat the leg (...) prison environment is not a place to write about home".

In conclusion, the visit to the prisoners was an opportunity to fulfil the Word of Jesus: "I was in prison and you came to visit me" (Mt 25:36). The JDPC members who lived this experience were very much touched by the little taste of what life is like behind bars. Those in the prisons are not the worst people among sinners. Above all, they remain beloved sons and daughters of the Father. Let us keep them in our prayers and as much as we can, let us reach out to them for nobody among those created in the image of God should be deprived of the love of Jesus. We are the witnesses of that message of love of Christ as we do "good" in memory of the Lord.

Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr
(Osogbo, Nigeria)

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"You know what I wrote, as the future motto of your Work, on the Letters of Reference one of you presented to me on his arrival at Algiers. Now, even though you know it, I nevertheless want to register it here for your successors. This good priest, from one of the most religious and peaceable dioceses of France, brought me his Letters of Reference to be allowed to celebrate Mass. I took them and without saying anything, instead of the ordinary formulation, I wrote *Visum pro martyrio*. I then gave him back his letters saying, 'Read this; do you agree?' 'It is for this I have come', he said to me simply."

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Lent and Easter Celebrations in St. Monica Nyankpala

As we all know, the period of lent and Easter are very important in the Catholic Church. The faithful of St. Monica parish committed themselves to embark on a deeper spiritual journey, which allowed them to deepen their conversion through the Christian message.

The majority of the parishioners of St. Monica come from other regions in Ghana. The reason for this is that Nyankpala host the research Institute –SARI ‘*Savanan Agriculture Research Institute*’ which was established by a German group of agriculture researchers since 1945 to help the savana zone of Ghana exploit their land in the most profitable way so as to bring the country towards self-reliance food production for the citizens. There is also an agriculture school upgraded to a university, which accommodates 2000 students per year.

The local people have embraced Islam and one would easily believe that the traditional religion has lost its influence on it. Yes, you are born Muslim and this is your religion from birth because Islam accepts a lot of the traditional religious customs, like marriages, pouring of libation etc. The people feel more at ease with Islam than with Christianity. But those who become Christian suffer from social religious pressure for embracing a different religion.

With a parish composed of government workers, there is instability in the Christian communities caused by transfers of personnel, children of workers going elsewhere to look for good schools. So during Lent and Easter season we work to

nourish their spiritual lives before they move out of Nyankpala to their new destinations.

During the Lenten and Easter seasons, we organised recollections, intensified the catechumenate, and maximised the participation in the celebration of the Eucharist, in the sacrament of reconciliation, and in the way of the Cross every Friday evening, which was led by a particular active group in the parish. These activities were celebrated both in the University community and in the parish at the same hours. Thus, each community had a priest celebrating with it. This allowed almost all the Christians to feel united and full members of the parish community. This year, we had five baptisms at the out-stations, fourteen in the parish and two at the university community.

It is worth mentioning that every Sunday, the priests divide themselves among the communities including our three out-stations to make sure that at least once in a month all the Christian communities have celebrated the Holy Eucharist. The communities not visited by a priest receive a stagiaire or a Catechist, with the possibility of receiving Holy Communion without a priest. Formation of youth animators is intensified for the good of the youth as a whole during the Lenten season through Easter season until Pentecost Sunday when we move back into normal life activities.

The celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation is strongly encouraged and there is often a good participation at the University community whereas

at the main parish community there is a very poor participation. Maybe we need to do more on the meaning of sin and its effect on the Christian faith. Sin is so identified with sex so much that abstinence from sex during this time means no sin. In short, many Christians in this particular community do not understand properly the sacrament of penance.

The Rosary prayer was intensified in order to help us prepare for the mystery of the resurrection on Easter night. The doctrine of the Church was taught as a reminder of Christian duties. Some did take fasting as a way of putting themselves clean before God. They are told not to do this as formality but as method of becoming self-aware of the sacredness of the human being created in the image of God and therefore should be holy as the heavenly father is holy. The faithful were also taught to make a fast that is pleasing to God. For example, the one who is inclined to drinking too much should make an effort to desist from this habit, and help the poor with the money he could have spent on drinking. It will be meaningless to refuse to drink during the Lenten season in order to catch up during the ordinary time of the Catholic liturgical year.

To conclude, I would like to mention that two important events took place during the end of Easter. The assistant Chairman of the parish pastoral council had his marriage blessed and on Pentecost Sunday, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal animated the celebration of the Holy Mass. You can agree with me on how vibrant the church was that day: filled with the spirit of the Holy Spirit. All participated actively. God does write straight on crooked lines.

Community members:

John Amona, M.Afr, Gazena Demisse, M.Afr, Patrick Kalonji
(Nyankpala, Ghana)



L-R: John, Patrick and Gazena

Lent to Easter – Cross to Glory

The 2017 Lenten season climaxed on Easter Sunday was a very special one for me. Indeed a unique spiritual journey from a painful beginning to a joyful ending. Not painful beginning and joyful ending for me alone but for every St. Vincent de Paul Parishioner who faithfully, intensively and reflectively journeyed with the suffering Messiah. A unique one not because it was my first time to experience Lent and Easter in my new parish and diocese, though it could be so to some extent, but especially due to the busy yet meaningful schedules of both the parish and the diocese.

This year's Lenten season opened with the usual celebration of Ash Wednesday on the 1st March, 2017 and ended with the celebration of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday the 16th April, 2017. During this period many activities took place to prepare us for the special and spiritual mature celebration of Easter. We had time to prepare the catechumen for the sacraments of Christian Initiation though at last only one adult Baptism and first Holy Communion was administered on Easter vigil as some of them could not meet up with the Catholic demand for one to receive the sacrament. The faithful were prepared at different stages to help them recall the values of their baptism, the sacrament that makes them Christians and the implication of the sacrament on their Christian way of life. Despite the fact that we had a parish Lenten retreat preached by a Diocesan priest, a Biblicist, Revd. Fr. Michael Akinsode, some church societies, groups, organizations and individuals went ahead to organise their retreats and novenas with specific suitable themes. These groups included the choir, the altar servers, the charismatic, the catholic youth organization of Nigeria and St. Jude. Our parish pastoral team comprised of Jonathan Bahago, Gilbert Rukundo, Edmond Ouedraogo, Dominic Abiriga and I, participated

actively in these spiritual exercises either as retreat masters or guiders.

Something very special happened in our parish and the diocese at large for the first time in the history of the diocese. This was the introduction of the Lenten Saving Container called "Kolo". This uncommon Yoruba cash saving container is made of clay soil, it cannot be opened unless you break it when you want to remove the contents. Our Bishop, John Akin Oyejola, moved by the motivating words of Jesus' command, *"I give you a new commandment; love one another as I have loved you"* John 13:34, suggested that we ask all parishioners including the priests to buy "Kolo" in which the money will be saved from our daily fasting and abstinence and at the end of the Lenten season brought it down to the church for the blessing and later on break the containers to get the contents. From the outcome results, I confirm that for sure this year's Lenten season was a season of exercising true sacrifice, in which the parishioners showed love of Christ to the poor and the needy in our society. The following words of our messiah became a reality once again, *"In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to the least of the brethren, you did it to me"* Matthew 25:40, it was all about faith in action. Bishop directed that the entire people of God in our diocese observe the Lenten obligations in a unique way by setting aside the fruit of our fasting and abstinence for the Diocesan Charity Office. The amount realised from our parish was #78,500 (\$212) and the total sum of #3,645,450 (\$9,852) was collected from our Diocesan collective fasting and abstinence. The money was used to support the following groups; Ipetumodu Rehabilitation Center, Care of the physically challenged students at college of education Oyo, Prison apostolate, and support hospital bills of the less privileged and mission owned orphanages, and tuitions fees of the less privileged students. The system of Lenten saving container "Kolo" has



Virgilius Kawama, M.Afr

come to stay in our diocese, as a concrete form of observing Lenten fasting and abstinence.

Nevertheless, the Bishop's creativity was received with some reservations confirmed by side-talks most especially influenced by the recessed economic situation that is killing many Nigerians especially our State of Osun which is counted among the Poorest States of our Nation. It is a State that relies only on government workers who have not been paid for more than a year now. It has no private industries apart from some small individual businesses. So I clearly understood the cry of the faithful. But was "Kolo" exercise a success? I would confidently say that it was a success. However, the negative financial impact on our parish that relies on the few retired parishioners was obvious. Even to pay the Diocesan Monthly Assessment and Levies was a problem.

No doubt, the Lenten season and Easter experience was a success in our parish. We appreciate God our Almighty Father who sustained our energetic and creative spirit, and our tireless efforts in caring for the mission of Christ at all levels. For sure it was a well lived Lenten journey to Easter, a fulfilling trip from a life of the cross to the glorified life. May the joy received remain with us now and forever more. Amen.

Virgilius Kawama, M.Afr
Osogbo, Nigeria

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

From the Provincial Council held in Tamale from 26th to 27 May 2017:

A WORD ON THE DEATH OF BR. VICTOR DERY

Victor's life story came as a consolation from a man of dedication right from the beginning. His passing on is a great loss to the province and the Society at large. We counted on Victor for many projects in the province and now have a great challenge to find a replacement. In the time of his sickness, the family took up the matter themselves and helped us a lot in caring for Victor. All the 5 dioceses of the north were very collaborative during the sickness, death and burial. May he rest in peace!

REPORTS FROM APOSTOLIC AREAS:

GHANA SECTOR:

TAMALE APOSTOLIC AREA:

- **Savelugu:** The community was doing well. William Curran is keeping the parish with Pierre Songre and Gaspard Cirimwami together with a stagiaire. Gaspard is working hard in the youth ministry and Pierre in the area of dialogue.
- **Nyankpala:** This is a community of three, two priests and a stagiaire. They are doing well they had a nice Easter celebration and a picnic held on their premises.
- **Provincial House:** All the five members were fine. Olivier Lecestre celebrated his 50th anniversary of priesthood on 13th May 2017, this also marked his final farewell to Ghana as he goes to France for good. The celebration was well organized and Olivier was enskinned as chief of development by the Dagomba.
- **Morin House:** Since the arrival of the late Victor Dery the community was trying to reorganize itself. They put much attention on his recovery but unfortunately he passed away. Roger continues with his dialysis at Tamale Teaching Hospital. Clement Tuureh is busy with the vocation promotion. On Easter Monday they took part in the diocesan picnic organized at Kamina barracks.
- The Area received Martin Grenier who visited all the communities. The visit was crowned by a shared meal with the confreres where they presented him a *kente* stole.

NAVRONGO-BOLGATANGA AREA:

- **Soe Parish / Haskew House community:** Things are getting on well. The parish house is under construction by the parishioners. They are also busy on the registration of the parish land. On Good Friday they had a reconciliation celebration to end the division and conflict which had been left behind a year or so ago. The parishioners were very happy to undergo this celebration. Dominic was present. The funeral service of Hugo van den Haute was successfully held and Bp. Alfred Agyenta presided over the liturgy. Erus Tirkey went to India for his home leave. The stagiaire finished and went on for Theology.
- From **Bunkpurugu** things are going on well. Stephen Ofonikot left the parish and Ghana on his way for a new appointment in SAP. Amani Bulambo replaced him as the Parish Priest for Bunkpurugu. This is the only community that Dominic is scheduled to visit before the end of June. Unfortunately, inter-clan fighting has resumed in the area. This is more the reason why the diocese is concentrating on developing Bunkpurugu parish as a possible way of bringing calm and sanity to the area.

WA AREA:

The confreres in the two Wa communities (Lavigerie House & Bishop's residence) are fine. Lavigerie house has now three members, John Chomba Mubanga, Patrick E Obai and one Stagiaire, Emmanuel Mario Nyirenda. In the parish, the pastoral work and other activities are ongoing. Bp. Richard is expected to make his pastoral visit from 13th - 16th July, 2017. It is during this visit that the dedication of the Church will be done. Another crucial issue that the parish is handling is securing the parish land and its four outstations.

KUMASI AREA:

- **Ejisu:** The four formators are well. Jacek is going for his home leave this June - July. Prosper Harelimana is preparing to go to Rome for studies. Christopher will attend a seminar for his studies in the Philippines during the second part of July. The academic year ended with the departure of the candidates on 23rd May 2017.
- **Spiritual Renewal Center (SRC):** At the SRC, Michael Targett and Jesús-Maria Velasco are both fine and well. Jesús was back from his home leave and is expected to end his term in October 2017. Michael Targett is hoping to go home for a short break this 2017. John Bosco Naa has joined the community temporarily.

NIGERIA SECTOR:

- **St. Thomas Agbowo Ibadan:** All the three confreres are doing well. The parish activities; pastoral, spiritual, physical and formative areas, are all well handled by the confreres. Materially the parish is experiencing some challenges such as leakages in the parish hall and the parish house also needs a complete overhaul of the roof.

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

- **St. Augustine Ojoo** will start roofing their church very soon. The Archbishop of Ibadan is waiting for us to give him a name of a priest-confrere who will be in charge of St. Augustine Ojoo.
- **St. Clement Formation house Ibadan:** All the confreres are doing well and the students had a break in the families of the Nigerians. They had a weeklong cultural celebration at the Dominican Institute.
- Emmanuel Mambwe shifted from St. Thomas Parish house to St. Clement formation house.
- **St. Vincent de Paul Ogo Oluwa Osogbo:** The community is doing well and the confreres enjoy the mission. Since 1st May Gilbert goes to help out at St. Mary's Parish Ayetoro where the priest in charge has two parishes to care for. He also has been appointed the chaplain of St. Leo and Saint Clare Nursery and primary schools. Jonathan goes to St. Theresa Parish Ifor Ilobu to assist a Diocesan priest. He goes every Sunday and other solemnities.
- **Stagiaires coordinator:** Nare Mohamadi and Edmond Ouedraogo finished their stage and are back in Burkina Faso for their holidays, before going to Kinshasa where they have been appointed to for Theology. Andrew Anab, the stagiaires coordinator, visited Dominic Abigira in Osogbo and found him doing well. He plans to visit Felix Kiboba at St. Thomas, Agbowo. He encourages stagiaires to continue learning and practicing the Yoruba language.
- Martin Grenier's Visit: He thanked the confreres for their hospitality and the mission done so far in the Nigeria Sector.

APPOINTMENTS AND ORDINATIONS:

- Malachy Oleru was been appointed to SAP in view of Mozambique.
- Prosper Harelimana, Provincial JPIC-ED Coordinator, is leaving the province to go to Rome for studies, the Council proposes Gazena Haile as his replacement.
- Stephen Ofonikot was appointed to SAP in view of South Africa.
- The priestly ordinations of confreres called by the province and those appointed to the province in 2017 are announced at the last page of this Link.
- The five stagiaires nominated to the Ghana Nigeria Province were appointed as follows:
 1. Hagenimana Clement from Rwanda, is appointed to Bolgatanga Community;
 2. John Bosco Mukulia from Uganda, to Savelugu Community
 3. Nicholas Iwuala from Uganda, to Agbowo Community
 4. Phil Xandry Aparece from Philippines, to Wa Community (Lavigerie); and
 5. Theogene Nshimiyimana from Rwanda, to Osogbo Community.
- Eleven candidates from Ejisu were presented to their respective Spiritual Year Centers.
- Ten candidates from St Clement Pre-Formation Center, Ibadan, were presented to St Martin of Tours Formation House, Ejisu.

There will be a meeting for confreres in the second term of mission to be held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2017. From our province those to attend are Victor Shehu, Gazena Haile and Vigilius Kawama.

At the end of the meeting, the Provincial Superior, Dominic Apee, thanked all the members of the Council for their collaboration over the years of his mandate as Provincial Superior. John Abobo responded in gratitude to Dominic for the great work he had done for the province.

Dominic dissolved the Council alerting everyone that they would still be called upon for any urgent matters before the incoming Council takes office.



Requiescat In Pace

Victor Dery. Born on 28th February 1958 and died on Thursday 29th April 2017 at Tamale, Ghana. 30 years of missionary life in Mali, India, Ghana and Italy.

Some family members of our confreres were called to glory:

- On 27 April 2017: **Mr Theoten Dakyie**, uncle of Berthrand Dakyie
- On 27 April 2017: **Father Timothy Midah**, uncle of Victor Shehu
- On 21 May 2017: **Mr Jose Mendivil**, grandfather of Maralf Jimenez
- On 25 June 2017: **Madam Mary Akubueze**, grandmother of Toby Ndiukwu

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



A Tribute to Bro. Victor Dery, M.Afr

On Saturday the 15th of October 2016, I went out with Bro Victor and two other Ghanaian Missionaries of Africa to a restaurant in Rome for supper. The occasion was to say good bye to Victor who, after more than 10 years of faithful and dedicated service to the Generalate Community in Rome, was leaving Rome the next day for Ghana for holidays and to take up his new appointment in Tamale. It was a happy event. We exchanged some pleasantries and encouraged one another in our vocation and ministries. He promised to welcome us with a cold Guinness (his favourite drink) anytime we are in Ghana for holidays. We climbed the hill back to our community, contended and wished each other good night and a safe journey to Victor because he was leaving early the next morning.

Safe journey indeed! Who would have guessed or believed that seven months later I would be standing here to address those same words to Victor?! Those words, "Safe Journey" back in October, were pronounced with feeling, with smiles and with hugs. Now it is with tears, pain and a deep sense of loss that we say good bye to you, Victor.

One of my confreres in Rome, upon hearing of the death of Victor remarked: in our Society of the Missionaries of Africa, the good ones decide to leave the Society, the best ones like Victor die too early, andhere we are!



Anthony viewing the body of Victor

Victor was one of those creatures God must have taken exceptional care in creating; he was simply special. Everything about him was out of the ordinary. I have had the privilege of living with Victor in Rome for two years; just two years; and that was practically the first time we were meeting. But those two years were more than enough to discover a man who was fulfilled, competent and happy. The Dutch have a saying that to know a man you need to have eaten one kilo of salt with him, meaning it takes an awfully long time to get to know someone. Victor was an exception.

If I had to describe Victor in two words I would say: **DISCREETLY COMPETENT**. **This was the man!**

Our house in Rome is a big house with about 75 bed rooms, built more than 60 years ago. For more than ten years Victor was responsible for the maintenance of this house. A 60 -year old ,75- bed room house! Was a tap leaking somewhere in the house? Was a door handle broken on the third floor? Did you need a special adaptor for your laptop? Was your bed too narrow for your oversized body? Did you want to know where you could buy a special gift to be sent to someone in Africa? Did you have some parcels to be posted? Victor was always the man to talk to. He was the live wire in the community. You could ask him anything, anytime, anywhere. He would be busy fiddling with something and you would have the impression that he is not paying attention to what you are requesting from him. You might, for instance, be explaining to him how your window was not closing properly and you would go away thinking the man was so busy he did not even pay attention to what you were telling him. A couple of days later, you go up to your room which you had carefully locked with a key which is safely in your pocket, only to realise to your surprise that the window has been fixed? And then you would wonder: when did he do it? How did he get into my room? A visitor may even ask: how did he know in which room I am? ***This was the man: discreet, competent, available and efficient.***

There was only one problem with Victor, which often annoyed me. I mentioned this to him once, and do you think he paid any attention to me? Not at all. He was incorrigible in that respect. The problem with Victor was getting him to answer his phone. He had a mobile phone but I think it would have been more appropriate to call it a fixed phone because you could call him as many times as you wanted and you would not get him. I doubt he ever knew where the phone was at any point in time. So, in a big house like ours, looking for someone who does not have the habit of carrying his phone with him can be quite challenging. You would go to his room and find the door open but the man is not there; you go down to the basement where he had his workshop and find the door open with tools strewn all over the place, but the man himself is not there; you climb the stairs to the third or fourth floor, and you arrive breathless and panting, hoping to find him there; wapi! If it was your lucky day, you would finally run into him in one of the numerous corridors pushing a trolley laden with God knows what; you would complain that you have been walking up and down the whole house looking for him and he tells you: it is good for your health. ***This was the man: he had a good sense of humour and enjoyed a good laugh.*** And what is more, he could also laugh at himself. When certain facilities like the wash room or a door was not functioning, he would put up a notice saying "Fuori Servizio", meaning out of service or out of order. Well, it happened that on one occasion he had a very bad cold and lost his voice completely. That did not stop him from going about his normal activities in the house, but he pinned a piece of paper to the back and front of his shirt which read: "Fuori Servizio" (Out of Service)!

If you asked Victor when you could see him in his workshop for whatever reason, he would say come anytime you want. Good luck. But when he said anytime, he really meant any time because he simply had no working hours. I recall watching a football match with some confreres until almost midnight and upon leaving the TV room we saw light in Victor's workshop a few metres away; thinking he had forgotten to switch off the lights I went to the workshop only to find the man crouched over some architectural drawings. I told him it was late to be working at that hour; he looked at his watch and said: oh, it is only 11.30. **This was the man: He was indefatigable and always available to render services anytime, anywhere.**

I cannot finish this tribute without referring to Victor's vocation of a Brother. The vocation of the Brother in our Society has evolved a lot from the jack of all trades who was considered a second-class missionary to the present-day Brothers with professions, with solid formation in Theology and related courses, and in positions of leadership and responsibility. Victor, somehow, was an embodiment of these two profiles, the past and the present: he was trained in the old school to be a jack of all trades in the sense that he could do anything and everything with competence and discretion, and at the same time he was a missionary Brother who had a full understanding of what it means to be a brother in the 21st century and was willing to adapt. He even accepted at one point to leave behind his workshop in Mali to go to India as a formator.. I personally became a brother because among other things, I was inspired by Brothers like Victor who were competent, selfless and dedicated to the work they did in a discreet and humble manner. **This was the man: he was a happily fulfilled Brother and loved his vocation of a Brother because he believed that was a gift from God. God calls each one by his name and Victor was grateful and delighted to be called to be Brother and nothing else.**

I want to end this tribute by paraphrasing a poem written by an American poet called Bessie Stanley. The poem is appropriately entitled: **"He has achieved success"**:

**"He has achieved Success who has lived well,
Laughed often and loved much:
Who has enjoyed the trust of his confreres,
The respect of many men and women in Mali, Ghana, India, Rome....
Who has fulfilled his missionary obligations with love and
accomplished his tasks with competence, efficiency and discretion;
Who has left the world better than he found it;
Whether by building a Church, or repairing a window
Whether by posting a letter or despatching medicines to sick his confrere
Whether by bringing out wine for his confreres to accompany their meal
Or whether by going faithfully to Madona del Riposo every Sunday for Mass;
Who has never lacked appreciation of Earth's beauty
Or failed to express it;
Who has always looked for the best in others
And given the best he had.
Whose life was an inspiration
Whose memory is a blessing"**.



I believe I know exactly what Victor is saying at this very moment; he must be saying: Tony, you are talking too much, go and sit down. **This was the man: he shied away from publicity and never wanted to draw attention to himself; he did what he had to do out of love and conviction and nothing else.**

But Victor, I am afraid today you have no choice; you are on the spotlight! We are painfully aware that life can never be the same again, that yesterday is gone. But the fact you have left behind a vacuum that can never be filled is a high tribute of the very special person that you were.

Another Poet (Paul Irlon) said life can be the same after a trinket (a small piece of jewellery of little value) has been lost, but life can never be the same after the loss of a treasure. Victor, you were indeed a treasurer to the Missionaries of Africa and we shall miss you.

With grateful hearts we thank God for the very rich and fulfilled missionary life you lived and for the many hearts you touched by your simplicity, joy and efficiency, we pray that your life may be an inspiration to the rest of us.

REST IN PEACE.

Tamale, 25/05/2017

Anthony Baaladong, M.Afr (Rome)

Escaping Death between Two Deaths:

Adios Father Van - Adios Chamba Kwame!

I escaped death between two deaths on 29th April 2017.

Hugo Van den Haute, M.Afr, affectionately called Father Van by people who knew him in Ghana, died on 12th November 2016 in Genk, Belgium. Father Van left the diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga in 2014. His death was unable to kill the loving memories he shared with the people he served. Thus the parishioners of St. Joseph Parish, Soe, the last parish where he served in Bolgatanga, organized a celebration in his memory. Two days were set apart for this celebration in collaboration with the other parishes where the 'obedient priest' served. On Friday 28th April 2017, they observed a wake keeping which commenced from 8pm; and on Saturday it was the thanksgiving Mass presided by the shepherd of the diocese, Most Reverend Alfred Agyenta.

On Friday, I left Bunkpurugu to witness the event and henceforth represent our community. Attending the mentioned celebrations affirmed my conviction that a missionary is born where he/she is sent, becoming a member of this family which goes beyond the Christian Community. It was neither the Society of the Missionaries of Africa nor the biological family of Father Van who initiated the organization of this memorable event. Indeed, more than ever, missionaries and our local churches should emulate this aspect of 'missionary rebirth': missionaries being born in the land of their mission. On both sides, we should take up the challenge: on one hand as missionaries to make the effort of immersing ourselves in our new family, and on the other hand as receiving church to nurture our new born, our missionaries, to care for them even as they are still alive. During the memorial Mass for Father Van, the people of Soe and other parishes witnessed to this family immersion of our confrere. The bishop described the late

missionary as his father in different ways and disclosed to us that Father Van baptized him. The homilist, Father Kevin Rand, M.Afr, portrayed Hugo as an obedient missionary.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the street leading to our community house in Bolgatanga, Haskew house, vibrated on the rhythm, dancing, singing, and joyful ululations of the traditional dance known in the area as the war dance. Indeed, the veil that separates us now with Father Hugo could not obstruct the joyful hope of our eternal life echoed by this remarkable celebration.

Lunch was served at Haskew house. As I had to travel back to Bunkpurugu the same day, and I had intended to visit our cook, Kwame Konlan Moses, who had been hospitalized at Nakpanduri, I left before the day was concluded at Bolgatanga. Little did I know that on my way back, at around 4:35pm, almost halfway to reaching home, I would have a car accident: unaware of a sudden puncture, I failed to control the car and in the next seconds the car flipped over. The eyewitnesses thought I was dead or seriously injured. For me it was a repeated example of Lazarus: I unbuckled up, opened the door, and came out of the car like Lazarus coming out of the tomb at the call of Jesus. People were amazed and thanked God with me to see that I did not incur any injuries. They stood by me, trying to give me the support I needed till the last second when we had to pull the car to the nearest town. My community members were moved with compassion and came to my rescue. Confreres sympathized with me through whatsapp messages on the platform of the province. Family and friends were supportive.

On our way back on the motorbike, with Father Maralf, we still stopped at the hospital to visit Chamba Kwame though it was very late (in Mɔɔ language Chamba could mean

master). Our cook was in a critical condition. We prayed at his bedside and the nurse on duty assured us that the situation was improving. Father Amani waited for us in the community. We shared about my accident and about the health of Kwame not knowing that early in the morning he will breathe his last breath. Hence, I found myself escaping death between two deaths, that of Father Van whose legacy we celebrated in Bolgatanga and that of Chamba Kwame whose body we buried the same Sunday 30th April 2017.

In fact, we had had a convivial meal with the workers on Wednesday and Kwame who was not feeling great took part and was vocal in the discussion as we chatted. Was it a way of saying farewell to us? In the evening as he prepared the last meal for us, he left me with an image of a responsible and generous man. As we needed some drinks in the house the same evening he told me: 'Father, at lunch time I left my bottle of beer in the fridge as I was not feeling well, so you may use it and then you will give it back to me another day'; the last words I heard from Kwame! The accident I had and the death of Kwame constituted a double shock to our community. These were difficult days for our workers and us. Many people sympathized with us including a delegation of four priests from our deanery who came up to Bunkpurugu to comfort us. For some days, the silence in the house was vocal! I caught our mama, cleaner in the house, staring at me as I stood outside, she just exclaimed: *Sambian, Yennu n gaar nipouk* (Last born-boy, may God receive thanks)!

Yes, we thank God through Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and the life. Adios Father Van - Adios Chamba Kwame!

Serge Boroto Zihahirwa, M.Afr
(Bunkpurugu, Ghana)

We Are to Be a People of Resurrection

It is an undisputable fact that when we face the death of someone we love, we face an unspeakable loss. The future is mapped out for us where there will always be a large absence of the person we have lost. At times, for some people, this reality of the loss is so great that there is even denial of death itself. Certainly, the apostles and disciples of Jesus felt the same after the death of their 'Oga,' their Master. They could not put things together. Moreover, the fear of the Pharisees, the high priests and all those who were opposing Jesus and his teaching terrified the disciples and apostles. They felt useless, empty and all that they had been doing and hearing/listening for three years seemed to have gone for good.

However, looking back at Jesus himself, he endured the worst suffering imaginable from his enemies. They tried various ways to arrest his genuine growing popularity without success. In the end his persecutors decided to try the final solution to terminate him completely by accusing him as a blasphemer equalising himself with Yahweh. That, according to them, would silence him for good. It would also re-establish their own authority and image among the people. In fact, they chose the worst kind of death known to humankind at that time: crucifixion, a shameful death meant for criminals. Having watched him die, they went home convinced that it was all over. Things would make an automatic U-turn; return to normalcy.

Jesus proved them wrong! After two days, he came charging from the

grave. That was the last straw for his enemies, which showed that not even death could scrap off the Jesus phenomenon. Consequently, they had no other option than to invent a lie, that his disciples came and stole his body. Yet their malicious invented lie did not work out. They spent their money for nothing trying to buy people to accept their lie. It is for this reason that Christianity came to its proper genesis. It became a reality. The sorrow of passion gave way to Joy, Peace and Life. "Dying you destroyed our death, and rising you restored our life." Truly, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is pointless and have not, after all been released from your sins" (1 Cor. 15:16).

Jesus' resurrection, therefore, inaugurates new creation in all of us. On our part, especially as missionaries, we are to reactivate that spirit of Easter, which is instilled in us; hence, become Easter missionaries, missionaries of the Good News. In other words, Christianity in this sense becomes for us not a puzzle to be solved, but a way of life to be adopted just like the apostles' experience. Christianity becomes not a creed to be memorised, but a person to be followed to the resurrection. If this is the case, then, the evil that exists in our contemporary world and in our country has to be eliminated. We must make effort and sacrifices, which Jesus made in order to transform our parishes, our formations houses, our countries, our world, in order for it to be a better place for us to live in. The forms of inflation, scarcity of essential commodities, unemployment, mass retrenchment, pensioners' suffering,



James Ngahy, M.Afr

the increasing armed robbery and kidnapping, drug abuse, human trafficking and child labour just to mention but a few may disappear from our midst. The so called 'religious killings' and burning of the churches and mosques may come to a peaceful end. Of course, we appreciate the effort of the Nigerian government for curbing the Boko Haram insurgents! There is now a bit of an optimistic spirit of resurrection for the betterment of each one of us. The optimistic spirit which is built on the solid foundation of our faith signifying the resurrection of Jesus, and of his victory. If we mount to this juncture, with our heads held straight, we can then claim to be a people of Easter, a people of resurrection. Death will have no power of us anymore in our missionary safari!

James Ngahy, M. Afr
(Ibadan, Nigeria)

"As far as I am concerned, I am in the knowledge that death can never extinguish the torch which I have lit in Ghana and Africa. Long after I am dead and gone, the light will continue to burn and be borne aloft, giving light and guidance to all people."

KWAME NKUMAH

When a Missionary Priest Is Enskinned Dagomba Chief!

The 50 years of priesthood of Fr. Olivier Lecestre, M.Afr, was celebrated at Holy Cross parish situated not far from the Ghana-Nigeria M.Afr provincial house in Tamale. The celebration was on the 13th May 2017, it started with Holy Mass.

In his homily, Fr. Olivier thanked God for many things. I can only mention a few. He was grateful to God that he was privileged to communicate with the natives of Tamale in their local language, Dagbani. He thanked God for the small Christian communities in the rural area, which were for him platforms to do his apostolate. Continuing thanking God, he mentioned that he was able to sense the 'interest' of Christians in their active participation in various activities in the parish and in the out-stations. Moreover, he mentioned by thanking God that he had a good inter-religion experience for peace, between Muslims and Christians during his apostolic ministry here in Tamale. As Saint Paul emphasised on bearing hardships for the sake of the gospel, Fr. Olivier also experienced hardships in various places including the various communities where he lived with his

confreres. To conclude he started a song "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good" and we all sung with him.

Before the final blessing, there came a time for the vote of thanks and speeches. The retired bishop of Tamale had the opportunity to thank Fr. Olivier for his good and hard work in the diocese. "Fr. Olivier pushed hard for the translation of the Bible into Dagbani", the retired-bishop mentioned. Many people from different parishes and out-stations came forth to say a big thank you and present their gifts to Fr. Olivier. It seemed that it was not enough of showers of praises till we reached the High-peak of vote of thanks: Fr. Olivier came to be recognised first and foremost as a White-Dagomba and was enskinned as a Dagomba Chief. This brought the attendance to cheer-up with much joy and local sounds in their lips. Local songs were sung accompanied with some local instrumental beats. Then a representative of the Muslim group, those who worked with Fr. Olivier for peace and dialogue between Christian and Muslims, presented to Fr. Olivier a gift of a Muslim-local dress. Fr. Olivier thanked everyone who came from far

and near to celebrate with him. He gave the final blessing, but the conclusion of the Eucharistic Celebration only opened the gate for the social gathering that was organised within the premises of Holy Cross parish. It was a lively celebration with a big meal of various local food, cultural dances and animations.

A week later, few days before Fr. Olivier took off to Accra to get his plane to France, the province of Ghana-Nigeria organised a supper-celebration to mark the farewell to Fr. Olivier. Many confreres from different communities in Ghana and including some from Nigeria were present. A gift from the province was given to Fr. Olivier by Fr. Roger.

I wish to personally thank Fr. Olivier for all he shared with me and express that he is a role model for the younger candidates of the Missionaries of Africa, like myself, and for confreres, young or old, who will embark on learning the local language and be in solidarity with the local people.

Patrick Kalonji Kadima
(Stagiaire in Nyankpala).

Returned to France as 'Malgu Naa'

I thank God for the celebration at Holy Cross of my 50 years of priesthood on the 13th of May; it was for me the occasion to say



good-bye to so many friends. In spite of the rain that was threatening, and which in fact came down abundantly during my homily (precisely during my repetition of it in Dagbani), many people came from Tamale town and

from the outstations of Holy Cross, Nyankpala, St Theresa; I was surprised by the different ways in which Dagombas expressed their gratitude for the service rendered: various citations read by some of

them, a poem read in Dagbani by another one. I was touched by what was said on that day. The gratitude of Dagombas was also more surprisingly expressed by the presence in the congregation of the new chief of Malishegu, Martin Adam, a practicing Catholic, presently Headmaster of Nalerigu SHS, who came forward and made me 'Malgu Naa'! ('Malgu' in Dagbani refers to 'rehabilitation' 'consolidating', 'sustaining'...) The word can, in fact, describe appropriately the ministry which is that all of us, priests and brothers, and I am grateful to Malishe Naa for honoring me with this title.

Olivier Lecestre, M.Afr
(France)

Olivier's Golden Jubilee: The Homily

"Father, all powerful and ever-living God, we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks."

Let me give you some of the reasons why I give thanks to God:

Peter asked Jesus: "What about us? We have left everything and followed you." Jesus said: "There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father for my sake and for the sake of the gospel, who will not receive a hundred fold houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and land, not without persecutions, now in this present time and, in the age to come, eternal life" (Marc 10: 29-30).

Long before Peter had asked his question, Abraham also had left his country: "Leave your country, your family and your father's house... Abraham went as Yahweh told him." Abraham 'who put his faith in God' (Genesis 15: 6), is an inspiration to all of us, priests/Brothers/Sisters who have left our various dioceses to join the Archdiocese of Tamale. This is the reason which explains the choice of today's first reading (Genesis 12:1-4).

To come back to the promise made by Jesus to his disciples who would receive a hundredfold what they had left behind them: How true it has been to me! I thank God when I see that, in my case, this promise is fulfilled beyond expectations. 'Mothers, brothers and sisters, children... so many of them; and land (in the sense of a large farm to be cultivated, the farm of the Lord, so that, by God's grace, it would produce a harvest that pleased him).

St Paul was saying (2 Timothy 1: 8-10): "Our Saviour Jesus Christ has brought eternal life through the proclamation of the Good News ('The Good News': the whole Christian message, summarized in the gospel but not limited to it.) I thank God who chose me to be one of the missionaries who contributed to the proclamation of the Good News initiated in Tamale in 1946 by our

predecessors: Fr. McCoy, Fr. Tryers, Fr. Paul Haskew, Fr. McNulty; a ministry initiated around the Major Seminary in 1960 by Fr. Pageault.

I thank God for the lasting inspiration which I found in my first parish priest, Fr. Milette, and soon after, in many of my confreres priests and Brothers. I thank God who called me to be one of those who found the joy of their life in their ministry in and around Tamale. I thank him for the ability he gave me to communicate with people in Dagbani without too much difficulty. This gift counts a lot in the joy I have found here. I thank him for the friendliness of so many Ghanaians which I have enjoyed from the time of my arrival up till now.

I also thank him for letting me see the growth of the Christian communities, both here at HC and in the rural sector.

All along my ministry I have been edified by the perseverance of many Secondary School students who remained Christians in spite of the troubles they had in their schools because of their faith... Their presence in church during the holidays has always impressed me. I also thank him for the fact that most of these students remain true to their Christian faith after the completion of their studies. Some among them prepare themselves to serve him as priests, some as missionaries. I thank God who lets me see this.

I thank God for having allowed me occasionally to sense the deep faith of some Christians: they are the real pillars of their communities. People like them increase my confidence that the work initiated by our predecessors will develop as it should despite the difficulties.

In Tamale and in its neighbouring districts we live among people of other faiths; some of them Muslims and



'Malgun Naa' Olivier

people of the traditional Religion have shown me in words and in actions that Christians and people of other religions must work together for the sake of peace in Tamale. I thank God for the grace that I have received through them.

St Paul was also telling Timothy: "With me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Gospel." Indeed, there are unavoidable disappointments attached to our ministry, disappointments which may lead to dissensions sometimes with people, sometimes among us, members of a same religious community... In fact, living in a religious community is not always easy; however, in my case, the numerous blessings which I found in our community life helped me to bear the hardships which I also found in it. I want to thank God for it.

Now that I prepare to return to France I know that, as St Paul says (Col. 2:5): "I may be absent in body, but in spirit I shall be here." I thank God for the confidence I have to be often united to you in prayer.

Finally, I also thank God for your coming here to join me at the occasion of my jubilee of ordination, May God bless you all.

"O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good... (x3) Yes, eternal is his love."

I will sing to my God never ceasing; all my life I will tell of his wonders; he's the maker of all earth and heaven, of the ocean the seas and all they hold.

Olivier Lecestre, M.Afr
(Now in France)

Our Joyful Witnessing Communities

The resurrection of Jesus Christ led to the resurrection of a joyful Christian community. After the sufferings and fears surrounding Calvary, the whole party of Jesus locked itself up in more fear and uncertainties.

“Peace be with you.” Do not fear! Salvation is here! These are the assuring words the risen Lord gave his friends when he appeared to them after the resurrection. “As the Father sent me, so am I sending you.” He immediately gave them the Christian Mission to go out and spread the message of love and forgiveness. He breathed on them the Holy Spirit – a Spirit of the Mercy of God, a Spirit of the Love of God. This marked the complete revelation of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Inspiration and biblical texts from readings of Divine Mercy Sunday Year A. Acts 2:42-47, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31.)

As Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father, the Spirit prompted the risen community into action. The community of believers moved from sitting in hiding, to walking the streets, encountering everyone they could meet.

This shift by the community was not automatic. It was not without doubts and questionings; as Thomas nicely

expressed them, “Unless I can see the holes...” And yet the community was able to believe and say through Thomas, “My Lord and my God! The shift was not without persecutions, rejections and even loss of life! And yet the community was able to persevere through the encouragement of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The community was risen! It believed, witnessed and grew in spite of all odds. The words of Jesus continue to be fulfilled - “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

If we cannot see the Lord today, there is something else we can see, the Community. Yes - our Missionaries of Africa communities! Yes indeed, the very communities that are rooted on the Christian Community - the Church!

Our communities have inherited the mission of Christ to believe and witness as we have been evangelized ourselves. We are the Living community of today. We express our belief;

- By self-dedication, self-giving to one another and to the apostolate.
- By devoted teaching of the Word.
- By fervent and consistent prayer (*lectio divina*, meditation, the

Eucharist, etc.)

- By sharing meals, a drink – by sharing our being!

Doubts and questionings are not foreign to us. External threats to our faith, mission and vocation are not strange to us either. We are under microscopic scrutiny from the most unassuming neighbor we come across.

All these end up strengthening our gift of faith in the Risen Christ. His greeting sounds louder in the face of each one of these challenges. **Peace be with you! Do not be afraid! Salvation is here!** The Holy Spirit still blows in us today prompting us to exclaim – **My Lord, my God!**

Jesus Christ continues to be our only true source of New Life and Hope. This Trinitarian Love flows daily into our communities making them joyful communities; making us rejoice with an incredible Joy!

May Our Lady, Queen of Africa intercede for us as we spread the love of God through our joy-filled community witnessing.

Christopher Chileshe, M.Afr
Ejisu, Ghana

Waiting for What?

My arrival in Nigeria prompted me to reflect and ponder on the importance of patience, patience of God for me and humanity. I spent almost ten months waiting and waiting while doing some learning of the Language. I discovered that Patience is the beginning, the middle, the end and it underlines our whole life's journey even in eternity.

Jesus in Mt 24:37-44 advises his disciples that if you want to save your lives, you must have patience and endurance. But to be honest there are so many things and situations in life that tries our patience from reckless drivers on the road, phone calls, traffic lights, members in the community, bad networks, meetings, appointments, prayers, recollections, studies,

disappointments, formation, parish priests, bursars, provincials, superior generals and Rome, at shops at banks etc. Another area that test our patience is that of our own personal weaknesses and failures we keep on doing day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year and we do not get tired at all. Severe test of our patience is one over which we have no control, that is sickness, old age, death and sometimes some various appointments and disappointments.

All these tests of our patience lead us to such faults as anger, bitterness, depressions, resentments and murmuring against one another and against our creator God. In life and as a disciple of Christ, we are called not

to develop the ability to wait but the ability to keep a good attitude while waiting. Our willing to wait reveals the value we place on what we are waiting for. We finally discovers that as long as we love the person, the situation the outcome and have confidence in ourselves, fellow human beings and God; waiting will never be too long or too boring. This waiting in itself becomes an accomplishment and a full measure of our reward.



Emmanuel, M.Afr

Emmanuel Chishala Mambwe, M.Afr
Ibadan, Nigeria

Holy Week Totems

While the Second World War was ravaging on, beneath the grounds of the Vatican very important excavations were underway with the sole aim of getting to the very tomb of Peter.

Such an enterprise similar to a mole's work, did pay off with the findings behind the "Graffiti Wall" of a grave containing the remains of a male.

The discovery was duly reported to Pope Pius XII with the scientific accuracy of 95% certainty of these being the bones of the fisherman Peter.

A caveat was added however that among these remnants those of a mouse were there too.

Wonderful as it may sound the Pope said "Leave it as it is, since together were found, together may the worship receive".

The Holy Week has the Donkey, the Cock and the Lamb in unison with Jesus too. And with the advice of the wise Pontifex (Pius XII), duly praise may they be granted as well.

PALM SUNDAY has the "Donkey" as its totem and here is what Jesus may have felt while sitting on its back...

"Thanks to this donkey that knows so well the way from Bethphage to Jerusalem and is not disturbed by the Hosannas and Halleluiahs... I am led safely to begin *The Week*".

The donkey *step after step*... had this to say while journeying: "These are onerous days my Master, but free of charge I am carrying you. Today it is me that I am of help to you though a stubborn and wayward donkey I am... Today it is me who is saving you from this mad crowd who later on will rather shout "Crucify, Crucify him".

Wouldn't it be more honest on their part to say "Lapidate him" according to their Law and ethics?

Why are they joining hands with the Roman scourge? People are strange...aren't they?"



GOOD FRIDAY dawn got woken up not by Pilate's cock on top of the Antonia's Watch Tower, but by the sudden negation of Peter's thrice "I Don't know him".

The cock muses on hearing Peter's fright: "How sleepy I was this dawn with the full moon working

inside me...but I am a cock and readily I must the "Ko-ko-li-ko" sound.

People say I am always on the positive side that's why I crow repeatedly!

Nonsense.

Today I feel that nothing is totally good or totally bad while hearing Peter.

There is a positive side in every way. That is why today I understand that "Deliver us from evil...could also be turned as *Deliver us from the good*, too.

Good or evil is not the "betting"??...but rather the "*Felix Culpa*" which carries on the day!



HOLY SATURDAY sees the Lamb that was slain... It is at sunset that the sacrificial lambs are made ready and I would call this ritual "*The slaughtering of the heart*".

On the Hill of Golgotha, I hear the "Lamb" with so great a love, forgiving His butchers and to His God crying...*Into your hands*.

The Lamb of Easter does not belong to any Creed, tribe or people...

This lamb whose only reason to be is to be The "Lamb"... causes a new race to rise.

Wonder not why lamb's cutlets are so fine!



Manuel Bonet, M.Afr
(Menorca, Spain)

CHUCKLE

'ALEXANDER THE GREAT ONCE CAME UPON DIOGENES, THE PHILOSOPHER, LOOKING INTENTLY AT A HEAP OF HUMAN BONES. ALEXANDER ASKED HIM,

"WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?"

DIOGENES ANSWERED: "SOMETHING I CANNOT FIND."

"AND WHAT IS THAT?" ASKED ALEXANDER.

THE PHILOSOPHER REPLIED,

"THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR FATHER'S BONES AND THOSE OF HIS SLAVES."

Priestly Ordinations

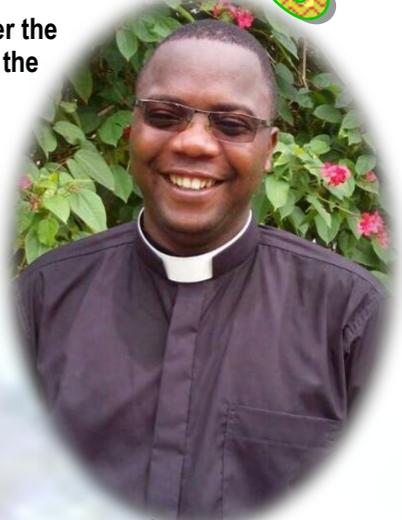
The Ghana-Nigeria Province joyfully receives two new confreres and appoints them to Ghana.

Moreover, the Provincial Superior, Fr. Dominic Apee, after the normal procedure, calls three confreres from Ghana to the ministry of the Priesthood.

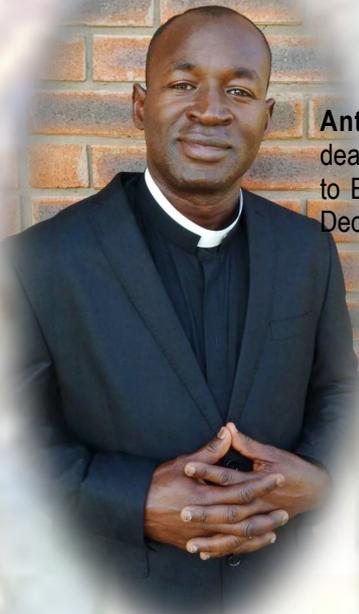
We now announce their ordinations as follows:



Hilaire Paluku Nzambi, M.Afr., was ordained deacon in Nairobi/Kenya. He is appointed to Nyankpala Community, Ghana. He will be ordained priest on **Sunday 16 July 2017** at 'Sanctuaire d'Adoration de Goma', DR Congo.



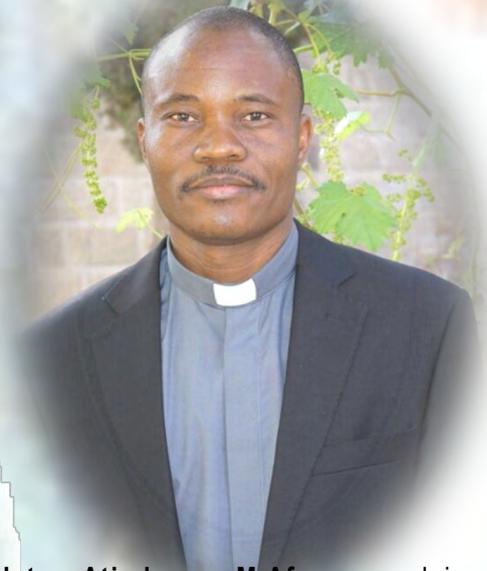
Peter Nyirenda, M.Afr., was ordained deacon in Abidjan/Côte d'Ivoire. He is appointed to Wa Community (Lavigerie), Ghana. He will be ordained priest on **Saturday 22 July 2017** at St Thomas Parish, Mzuzu, Malawi.



Anthony Wie Batioka, M.Afr., was ordained deacon in Merrivale/South Africa. He is appointed to Bandiagara/Mali. He will be ordained priest in December in Wa Diocese, Ghana.



Paul Donnibe, M.Afr., was ordained deacon in Abidjan/Côte d'Ivoire. He is appointed to East Africa Province. He will be ordained priest on **Saturday 22 July 2017** at Mary Help of Christians Parish, Sunyani-Odumese, Ghana.



Cletus Atindaana, M.Afr., was ordained deacon in Jerusalem/Israel. He is appointed to Nioro du Sahel/Mali. He will be ordained priest on **Saturday 26 August 2017** at Bongo Parish, Navrongo-Bolgatanga diocese, Ghana.

May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfillment.

BE APOSTLES, NOTHING BUT APOSTLES.