

GHANA-NIGERIA LINK

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THE SOCIETY OF THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

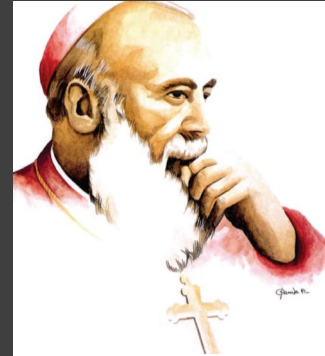
FAITH AND COVID 19: MISSION AND MUTUAL SUPPORT AMIDST CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

The first regular number of Ghana-Nigeria Link of the year 2020 after the special edition of February 2020 comes in the context of fears, uncertainties and anxieties caused by the pandemic of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) and restrictive measures imposed by various governments in the efforts to curb the spread of the deadly and highly contaminating virus.

In Ghana-Nigeria Province the closure of borders and suspension of flights have locked down some confreres and students, who were to resume to mission or go home for holidays. The provincial council was postponed twice and many other things that have been put on hold till further

notice.

The largest part of this issue focuses on the Covid-19 with respect to how mission continues despite the effects of the pandemic. Some Ejisu students rose beyond fears and anxieties caused by the virus and brought their philosophical analysis of the virus, of its effects and the means of preventing its spread since it attacks everyone irrespective of gender, age, education, political affiliation, social status, spiritualities, etc. Even if Covid-19 is not the first pandemic to befall the world, all the same it has brought the world on a standstill! However, the Christian faith sustains many with hope that even the current pandemic is not an end, is a means. Even if



Our loving founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie

churches and other worshipping places are closed! Far from being defeated, life continues! That is why you will find in this issue some other articles reflecting on other aspects of life.

Editorial

On behalf of the Media Team members, I sincerely thank you for your various contributions via your reflections, pieces of advice, corrections, and collaboration you have continued to show us. Even by reading this issue you contribute to achieving the aim of

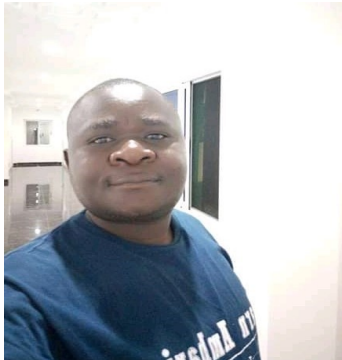
its existence. We look forward to your comments and other contributions that will make the next issue better. Stay safe and keep safe, your life is very precious.

By Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr.

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St Luke's Parish ; New initiative of Gh-Ng Province



BY VIRGILIUS KAWAMA

(We can do all things in Him who strengthens us – Phil. 4:13)

INTRODUCTION

This is St. Luke's Parish, the latest initiative of the Ghana/Nigeria Province, and the first non-Yoruba Mission of our Society in Nigeria. The Pastoral Team consists of Johan Miltenburg, John William Nkhoma, and Virgilius Kawama.

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MINNA

The Catholic Diocese of Minna started in 1911 as an Outstation of Lokoja. Fr Léon Bourge, of the Society of African Missions (SMA) was the first Missionary to plant the seed of evangelization in the Diocese. The Minna Outstation expanded into a mission territory under the SMA fathers from 1911 to 1962. During this period, the SMA

Fathers worked tirelessly, building schools and churches. Later on, the SMA Fathers were assisted in their work by the Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) Sisters, the Sisters of St. Louis (SSL) and the St. Patrick Fathers (Kiltegans) who did tremendous work in education and medical apostolates. In 1964, Minna was established as the Apostolic Prefecture when the territory was detached from Kaduna Archdiocese. The St Patrick Fathers (SPS) took over the affairs of the Prefecture with Monsignor Edmund Fitzgibbon as Prefect Apostolic. The Sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) joined the Prefecture. In 1973 the Apostolic Prefecture of Minna was raised to the status of a Diocese with Most Rev. Dr. Christopher Abba as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Minna, under the Ecclesiastical Province of Kaduna. The Irish Sisters of Mercy and Sisters of the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (DMMM) joined the diocese.

Bishop Christopher Abba was transferred to the Diocese of Yola and Bishop



Martin Igwemezie Uzoukwu was ordained the second Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Minna. The New Evangelization Sisters (NES), Sisters of the Sacred Heart (SSH), Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus (HHCJ), Sisters of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus (EHJ), Our Lady of Fatima Sisters (OLF), Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters (IHM), Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC), Franciscan Sisters, Oblates of the Virgin Mary (OMV), Missionaries of St Paul (MSP), Claretian Missionary Fathers (CMF)...!

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Theatine Fathers (CR), Missionaries of Divine Mercy Congregation (MDM), Missionary Sisters of St Faustina (MSSF) and Ad Gentes Missionaries have served in the Diocese since its inception. As we can see, many congregations of priests, brothers and sisters joined in the diocese bringing each the contribution of their charism in the pastoral of the diocese through parish, school and health apostolates. However, presently there are only four non-Nigerian Missionaries working in the Diocese: one Medical Missionaries of Mary Sister and the three M.Afrs. Today, there are 75 parishes, 6 quasi parishes, and 7 chaplaincies spread over an area of about 56,229,000 sq kilometers. The major ethnic composition of the Diocese includes Nupe, Gbagyi, Kadara, Koro, Pangu, and Kamuku. Other ethnic groups from around Nigeria include Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The population of the Diocese is 77,589 out of about 4 million people in Niger State. One of the policies of Bishop Martin is the establishment of schools in all parishes. The diocese has 81 diocesan priests, of whom 20 are abroad for studies and mission work.

BIRTH OF ST LUKE'S PARISH

St Luke's Catholic Church, Gyedna Village, is our parish main centre. St Luke's Church was not in the plan of the Diocese to be a parish anytime soon due to lack of what it takes to be a parish. Nevertheless, inspired by the words of St Paul, "*We can do all things in Him who strengthens us –*

Phil. 4:13", together with the Ghana/Nigeria Province Authority, we opted for St Luke's Church for the following reasons: 1. The Church is 300 metres away from our land bought for residence, youth apostolate, hospitality centre and vocation work. 2. The Church was the last outpost of St Michael parish, Garam, thus giving us options to open more churches in the surrounding villages where Catholicism was not present yet. 3. The environmental territory is more suitable in answering to our White Fathers' charism of Encounter, Dialogue, Justice and Peace, Primary Evangelisation, On-Going Formation, and so on. 4. Since we will live in a community of three Confreres for parish work, two Seminarians, Confreres in-charge of the Minna Project, and the Vocation Promoter (an estimate of 7 White Fathers), we felt the immediate need for an environment that will keep the confreres busy, not only today but forever, and St Luke's location was found capable of keeping all our Confreres very busy as they spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in their various apostolates. 5. St Luke's Church being at the end of St Michael parish will also give a clear geographical demarcation between St Michael parish (Minna Diocese), St Theresa parish (Abuja Archdiocese), St Charles parish (Minna Diocese), St Dominic parish (Kaduna Archdiocese) and the White Fathers' parish. 6. St Luke's Church gives us more advantageous options than any other church in the area.

St Luke's Church was approved as a M.Afr parish main centre by the Bishop with his council in their meeting on 28th November 2018. They acknowledged the fact that the M.Afr are among the few missionary congregations keeping to their charism, not being misled by material desires for big/.....

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town parishes but by the need of the time, able to foresee the future of the Church for God's glory, truly missionaries who are ready to struggle to contribute to the mission of Christ. Our presence in the Diocese is very much appreciated.

St Luke's Parish is located in the boundaries between Abuja Archdiocese, Kaduna Archdiocese, and Minna Diocese, in the remote area named Gyedna, in Kwamba Deanery. It has five centres: one is predominantly for the Igbo, while the other four are for the Gbagyi people, two of which also cater for English speakers, and two exclusively for Gbagyi speakers. Some few people speak pidgin English and broken Hausa

The population is above 250 parishioners and the majority are young people between 20 to 45 years old of age. Gbagyi is the tribe and main language of the natives. The first Parish Mass was celebrated on the 2nd December 2018.

CHURCHES MAKING ST LUKE'S PARISH

St Luke's Parish is made up of five Churches, though with more possibilities of opening new ones especially after our catechists complete their training and we get more confreres. St Luke's - Gyedna, Parish Main Centre, is along the foreseen dual carriage way that connects Kaduna State, Niger State and Abuja/Federal Capital Territory. It is a village filled up with members of the Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA), the strongest protestant Church in our area. We relate very well and celebrate Christmas, New Year, and Easter together, rotating from one Church to the other. Our main church building is progressing well despite funding problems. It is at the roofing stage. The multipurpose hall has been renovated, strengthened and tiled. The friends as well as the Church members have made their own good contributions. The Bishop, Vicar General, Dean, Chiefs, and so many priests and laity appreciate the M.Afr.'s good job at Gyedna. The other four Churches are having their different projects. St Peter-Azu church is at roofing stage. St Martin-Chawa church is plastered and windows fixed. St Kizito-Boyi Madaki church has floored the ground. St Peter-Ijah Gbagyi has bought the land for a permanent church building. All the churches demonstrate obvious prospects of growth.

PARISH APOSTOLATE

Since its inception as a parish, a good number of confreres have contributed to offering a missionary dimension to our Sunday Parish Apostolate. They include: the Superior General Fr Stanley Lubungo, the Provincial Superior Fr John Aserbire, the Provincial Treasurer Br John Abobo, the Society Building Committee Officer Fr Jose Manuel Gordejuela, the Provincial Delegate Fr Emmanuel Mambwe, the Provincial Councillor Fr John Mubanga, and the Vocation Director Fr Victor Shehu. The Bishop of Oshogbo Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. John Akinkumi Oyejola, has been a blessing too in our new mission. Our Parish Apostolate is typical primary evangelisation. We are involved in the formation of the laity through church councils, organizations, societies, committees, and groups. As at now, we have the following: Catechists, Catholic Men Organization (CMO), Catholic Women Organization (CWO), Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), Block Rosary Movement, Choir, Zumutan Mata (Typical Hausa Women Group), Zumutan Maza (Typical Hausa Men Group), Charismatics, Lectors/Lay Readers, Legion of Mary, AltarServers, Cadets, St Vincent de Paul, Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, Crossing the Red Sea Prayer Ministry, Religious and Schoolcontinued on the following page!

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Education Committee, Liturgical Committee, Welfare Committee, Communications Committee, Finance Committee, Building/Land Committee, Harvest Committee, Youth/Children Affairs Committee, Marriage and Family Life Committee. We visit our parishioners and non-parishioners in the spirit of Encounter, Ecumenism and Dialogue.

2020 PASTORAL MAJOR CONCERN

Our 2020 Pastoral Plan of Activities was drawn-up on 3rd January 2020. It consists of all the plans of St Luke's Parish, the Deanery and the Diocese. The Pastoral Team agreed to dedicate more time and resources to the formation of the laity, to continue training our four Catechists who speak Gbagyi and Hausa, to organize monthly seminars and sessions in different fields, to buy all Parish liturgical materials, to empower our workers and willing parishioners through skills acquisition in shoe and belt making, hairdressing, barbing, farming, vaseline, airfreshner and liquid soap making. Our intention is to lay a proper foundation for the laity. Experts in different topics will be consulted for help in teaching and guiding our parishioners.

CONCLUSION; *We can do all things in Him who strengthens us – Phil. 4:13.* St. Luke's Parish is growing fast. The number of parishioners keeps on increasing; we started with about 100 faithful but now we record above 250 parishioners every Sunday. The parishioners are very good, encouraging, simple, hospitable, friendly, and cooperative. All the successes recorded so far are the result of our total trust in God who strengthens us, and our focused leadership, starting with the General Council, Provincial Council, Sector Council, Parish Team, Parish Pastoral Team, and our dedicated community workers. We appreciate your efforts and our prayers are always with you. *With Mary our Mother, We succeed!!!*

SOME THOUGHTS ON COVID 19

There is an African adage that says uneasy is the head that wears the crown. The pandemic of Corona virus is like a mighty rock falling from the



The virus attacks everyone irrespective of gender, age, colour, educational, political or social status.

sky that makes everyone run helter-skelter for cover. The virus attacks everyone irrespective of gender, age, colour, educational, political or social status. No single minute passes by without many

of us tuning to a television or radio station or checking on social media to get updates about the corona virus. It really brings panic, anxiety and fear among all and sundry. However, when I hear about the new pandemic of Corona virus the first question I ask myself is "what is it about, and where does it come from?" Of course, this pandemic is not the first of its kind. Over the years, the world has experienced similar illnesses, which took the lives of many people, though many others survived them.

However, this particular one, Corona virus/Covid-19, brings lots of fear in people's minds due to the rate and speed at which it spreads from one person to another or from one country to another. For sure, it sends shivers down my spine any time I hear about the big number of people who are infected with the disease, and are dying from it all over the world. Are we now approaching the end of the world one may even ask? Even the Churches that serve as one of our main sources

of hope and consolation in moments like these have all closed because of the disease.

Another question that tickles my mind is the following: there are indeed many other illnesses, such as cholera, malaria, ebola, etc., which claimed and still claim lots of lives, but with God's help researchers have managed to find an appropriate medication which succeeds in curing many. How come that this particular one comes at terrible speed, and we are not able to stop it? Today, because of this virus, the whole world is shaken and divided, and there is no more communication among nations. Nations close their borders and people are scattered left and right. Those who find themselves abroad can't go back to their home countries.

We are now even losing slowly our rich African values because of this disease. It is a common practice of Africans exchanging pleasantries with handshakes, hugs, visiting each other, sitting together and discussing about different issues going on in society. But now we are asked to observe "social distancing". School children cannot go to school until further notice and the notoriously religious African cannot go to church or places of worship to exercise their religious franchise. Where are we now? And where are we going to? There seem to be no more African values as we used to know. This Corona Virus pandemic seems to destroy all our activities and our happy social encounters.

But as a Christian, I strongly believe that even though

church buildings may all be closed, I can never lose hope or blame God, because the Church, which is the Family of God, can never be closed. We are the Church, and therefore we must remain steadfast and faithful to our belief in God.

We should remember the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman in John 4:21-24, "A time is coming when you shall worship God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem, but from the heart, for God is Spirit and those who truly worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth".

May the Good Lord continue to listen to the cry of his people, and save us from this pandemic of Corona virus. Amen.

By Barthelemy Buredi Wa Buredi (Stagiaire in Wa)

ST. THOMAS COMMUNITY-AGBOWO ON COVID 19

At the eve of the year 2020, nobody thought that 2020 would be such a disastrous year in loss of human lives and properties. I want to believe that nobody ever thought that the next challenge to the world so advanced in sciences and technologies would come from a mere virus. Now the reality speaks by itself.

When Covid-19 cases were reported in China, some people in other parts of the world believed that it would not go far; soon it hit Europe with its deadly grief, before settling dreadfully in USA. We saw it coming; we campaigned jokingly about it hoping that the outbreak would not reach us. Africa was paradoxically considered immune because of the hot climate and, the black people who could have had innate resistance to the virus at one hand. At the other, streets of cities in Africa would be unable to contain the victims because of poor health and social infrastructures. At the end of April 2020, none of the above predicaments

ments. The Archdiocese of Ibadan did not make exception. Each time the Federal Government of Nigeria and Oyo State in which the great part of Ibadan Archdiocese is situated, updated the pandemic restrictions, the Archdiocese gave further updates on pastoral of the Archdiocese. From March to April 15th, 9 circulars were issued on the pandemic. The challenges of the pandemic on mission can be articulated on 4 main points; namely prayer life, media, charity and community life.

March 20, in which the Archbishop of Ibadan ordered the total shutdown of all catholic schools and schools run by religious congregations, the churches were to remain open as



seem to give any clear predicament of what Africa will be tomorrow.

The Church moved along with the world following directives of scientists and, encouraged the faithful to be part of the fight initiated by respective govern-

more than ever, priests in the parishes were invited to pray for their respective parishioners and to connect with them through social media. Three weeks prior to Easter Sunday witnessed drastic changes in the organisation of pastoral activities in the Archdiocese of Ibadan. In the chancery circular 04 of

Prayer life: Parishes exist for the care of the people of God in a given jurisdiction. During the covid-19 pandemic

the source of solace for people. The medical personnel were invited to take body temperature, and all Lay faithful were to keep social distancing and wash their hands. Church leaders were to provide soap and water, and hand sanitizers for all church attendants. Five days later, the chancery circular 05 was issued inviting to reduce the number of those allowed to attend the Mass at once to 30 only and asked priests in parishes to multiply Masses. Thus, the parish team organised a time table in which four Masses would be celebrated in the 2 main Churches (St Augustine Church Ojoo and St. Thomas Agbowo), three Masses at St. Martin de Porres Ajobo, two Masses at St. Stephen Ajibode and one Mass at Mary Queen of Angels Igbo Oloyin. That was the way to reach out to many people in all our outstations on Sundays. Two daily Masses were foreseen at St. Thomas Agbowo while outstations would keep their normal schedule. Many other policies were introduced to organise the Holy Week. However, two days later the chancery circular 06-2020 announced

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“We have come to the level of STAY AT HOME AND PRAY. Priests should offer Masses for the people without the people physically present. Time for the Masses should be communicated to the people so that they are united in prayer at the sacred Hour”. Besides the circular instituted the holy hour: “Holy Hour: Priests are to expose the Blessed Sacrament from 3:00pm to 4:00pm daily”. The policy encouraged people to observe the holy hour from their respective homes through various devotions though. On the Palm Sunday, only priests were called to celebrate

Masses without the people and make the blessed palms available for the people. At all our Churches, the Lay faithful were waiting for palms which they

joyfully took home as an alternative. Till the end April 2020, the people cannot attend Masses physically; we offer Masses for them and invite them to be in communion with us.

The role of parish media teams: They played vital roles in the Sunday face book stream live. From Palm Sunday, the media team began to broadcast the live stream of the Mass on face book pages of St. Thomas Parish and St. Augustine Quasi-Parish. The face book page of St. Augustine recorded the number of viewers varying from 600 to 867 whereas that of St. Thomas Parish recorded from 130 to 187. No doubt that the face book broadcasting served many people both parishioners and none parishioners both within and without parish premises. The efforts are still made to improve the coverage because of network hiccups and quality of pictures. Since in

Oyo State no gathering beyond 10 persons is allowed and churches and places of worship are closed, we only introduced 4 choristers to care for songs and 2 media clues representing both parish communities. The experience revealed that the best singing is not about numbers. After all we are all ‘choristers!’

Charity reach out: Some people continued to believe that corona virus is political scam to siphon government money. However, lives of many at this particular time our history have changed

“Surely, the covid-19 has affected the way we think and do mission but the mission continues even in the confinement”

forever. Those who have not yet contracted the disease have been affected by its effects or decisions to curtail its spread. The closure of schools, markets, hotels, bars and restaurant and shops that do not sell provisions provoked loss of innumerable jobs. The low income earning people found themselves eating their capital thus jeopardising their tomorrow which remains like a long tunnel, even if the covid-19 pandemic should end today. In many populated areas of Ibadan insecurity caused by robbery is on increase. According to some witnesses many young people patrol streets every night from 10.00pm to 3.00am. In the morning, the leftover of burnt tyres in all corners of Agbowo Ibadan testify to the effects of the patrol. People are hungry and desperate, life has become unbearable.



**By Gilbert Rukundo,
M.Afr**

The directive of the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Ibadan to feed the needy made us realise how deep the crisis hit the people. Hundreds of families were found to be hungry. Unfortunately, the limited resources available could not reach all identified parishioners and neighbours to afford 4 kilos of rice, 2 kilos of beans and 2 kilos of Garri in the first batch of charity reach out. We set up a task force committee not only to look after the distribution of food but also to raise funds from the members we supposed to be comfortable enough to contribute. Some of them contributed joyful and generously but others begrudged the initiative. At last, by the end of April over two hundred packs at St. Augustine Quasi-Parish Ojoo and about hundred packs of aforementioned items were distributed at St. Thomas Parish Agbowo. The fund sourcing continues until the pandemic is something of the past. At which cost? God will tell. The parishioners will ever be grateful to the donors who intervened timely.

Community life: The community remained a unifying force. More than ever before, the community was faithful to morning and evening prayers, daily Eucharist celebrated in the chapel for the intentions of the parishioners and the world, the Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament from 3pm to 4pm, celebration of various meaningful events around agape table before lunch and evening time together watching the news. The meal times were occasion to share information from parishioners, the situation in the country and news from our home countries and discussion about various topics.

Continued

Some emergency meetings allowed deeper decisions and deliberations. In a way, the pandemic crisis forced us to get closer.

In conclusion, the covid-19 pandemic brought the world to the knees. Many people never imagined that they could be anything at all that can put the world on a standstill. For many people, it has provided the occasion to realise that only God is almighty. Some parishioners both young and old ones expressed that they never experienced any event that

could lead to the closure of worshipping places which actually, in other challenges, are the places where people run to for comfort and consolation. Though Churches remained open in the Archdiocese of Ibadan the public Masses are not allowed. People are learning to live without daily Masses and the Holy Communion. The spiritual communion is always encouraged to those who attend Masses on television or other media and social Medias. Visitations of parishioners and others were reduced to media and social media communica-

tions and, the commonest greeting gesture, the handshake, was proscribed. The only hope is stay at home and pray, wash hands and use sanitizers. How will this come to an end? Surely, the covid-19 affected the way we think and do mission but the mission continued even in the confinement. Nobody can give guarantees; our only help will come from the Lord.

FOOD RELIEF FOR THE MOST AFFECTED



REALITY CHECK! Covid 19 is not the world's worst pandemic!!!

1. **ANTONINE_PLAGUE** This occurred in 165 AD and claimed 5 million lives. It swept over Asia, Egypt, Greece and Italy. Just in case you think it's the first time Italy is leading.

2. **PLAGUE_OF_JUSTINIAN**. It occurred between 541 to 542, just in 1 year 25 million people were dead. Each day, death toll counted 10,000.

3. **THE_FLU_PANDEMIC** Also known as THE SPANISH FLU. It was between 1918 to 1920, just 100 years ago. By that time the world had 1.5 billion people, 500 million got the disease and that was 1/3 of the total population. In the first week alone, there was a record 25 million deaths, worse than first world war itself.

Corona virus is mostly killing the elderly and those already weakened by other diseases but the Spanish flu respected no age group, it claimed 50 million lives.

4. **THE_3RD_PLAGUE_OF_1855** This one also started from China and killed 10 million Indians in less than one year. You wouldn't want to hear the total number of global death. By now you want to ask me whether the world ended, the answer is it didn't, lol.

5. **THE_BLACK_DEATH**. This was by far the worst. It occurred from 1346-1353, that was 7 years long pandemic. It was caused by bubonic plague transmitted by fleas.

By that time, the world's population was 400 million, then 200 million died. Half of the world's population died. If the world was to end with a disease, it would end that time not with corona.

It is said that during that plague, the living spent most of their time hurrying the dead in mass graves and yet others were left unburied.

By today, corona deaths are not close to half a million. So, whenever you feel frightened by corona, just know that it will never be recorded among world's top 20 pandemics, it's not close. The world is not ending with it, we shall live on. Well, people are dying but not even half will die. We shall remain.

**André Schaminée
GhN Provincial Secretary**

CONFUSION OF MANKIND AND LESSONS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS



By Tengbani Simon Dandeyi

Human history has witnessed some very terrible plagues in the past, causing even millions of people to die, but in this

third millennium it is the first occurrence of such an incomprehensible, inconvenient, shocking, frustrating, fearful and uncomfortable pandemic that hits humanity.

Man is endowed with intelligence, expertise in the field of medicine, technological advancement and highly spiritual and religious knowledge. Brilliant scientists and great philosophers ponder on finding the synergy between life and death. Everyone is bewildered of where to go, in order to sustain his/her existence.

Therefore, we all suddenly turn to be metaphysicians with a lot of metaphysical questions about reality. The Coronavirus pandemic has shown humanity's vulnerability and nothingness before the source of our being. We are witnessing the fact that all countries find themselves on the same level ground without disparities. Our humanness is bonded by our diversities and uniqueness. As we are all under the auspices of World Health Organization (WHO), it is a global war against this pandemic without taking into account race, religion, color etc. In this global fight, what moral duty do we have towards the weak, needy or the vulnerable in order to alleviate their suffering? We are all called to stand up against injustice during this period for the common good. The voice of the Creator is heard in the voices of these individuals. Let us rise up to the task during this period of Easter, to ignite hope in them as the Lord is risen.

Nature in its justice and fairness, pre-

sents humanity at every moment with significant lessons in its manifestation, but we turn up to be blind and deaf towards reality. Our negligence of the messages of nature, makes us miss the signs it gives. Human beings claim to be intelligent even beyond the Divine order, as well as being masters of everything in this wonderful world. Covid-19 is in its nature pricking our conscience to reflect more deeply about the value of human life. Life is the center of all human endeavors, of all forms of social associations in politics, religion, jobs, education etc.

Our world is volatile with our negligence to control power, money, fame, sex and other maladjusted acts that make the world to bleed because we normalize them. We live in a world where racism, modern slavery, neocolonialism, assimilation, dictatorship and imperialism are dominant in our society. It is from our inability to get this wounded world healed, that the pandemic befalls on us. Coronavirus puts the world in total dismay and confusion. The intellectually inclined cannot give answers to the questions that fly everywhere.

Consequences of the Virus:

This pandemic has shown the defects in human activities. Common religious activities are halted, educational activities are stopped, and businesses are distracted, economies

dwindled, social and political affairs have been interrupted. Indeed, everything that concerns human living has been shaken.

Tensions are very high, people are thinking about life. People are psychologically traumatized and tragedy surpasses everything that surrounds us.

Fear, anxiety, confusion and hopelessness have clouded the minds of many. People are in a state of helplessness, and being thoughtless, man is in the darkest moments of his life. Man is dumbfounded as his peace is disturbed. Hardship is hilarious during this period of lockdown and self-quarantine. Poverty and hunger are on the rise as the masses face the repercussions posed by the pandemic.

The inability to grasp the real meaning of what is happening, thus, the confusion is very high. Covid-19 exposes the claims of man knowing everything as not being true. This is bringing our rationality to insignificant measure, with the unanswered questions.

Some Lessons;

Death, in the book of Louis Christiaens SJ, *Quest for God, quest for self* (1979), posited that eternity does not exist in another life. Not even in another world. Not even outside of time. Eternity exists in the life after death, where man questions his destination. To meditate upon death is to meditate upon life, its deep reality and meaning. So, our lives bear dimensions of eternity, not for after this life, not beyond it, but here and now, we are conscious of participating in the continued act of creation.

Hygiene and order; the pandemic is a wake-up call for all people to really take a serious look at the sanity and cleanliness of the environment. The places we live in, work, play, are sometimes very dirty and untidy. We are extremely entreated to clean up the beautiful earth created for us.

Reunion and reconnection with one another and with God deeply. Work, school, religious activities disconnect us from one another. We spend less time with family and even with God.

This is a moment of silence and meditation on reality. There is too much noise and disturbance in our world. Now we are entreated to stay at home to get connected with one another.

Man's knowledge is questioned as he ponders about this pandemic. Is man the master of everything? We are thereby cautioned on claiming to know everything. There is a Being greater than our imaginations. So, those who doubt the existence of God and believing in themselves with their logical reasoning that they know everything and therefore think that God does not exist, are astonished and are on the move in search of the All-knowing.

Listening, understanding and acting. The pandemic gives the signal to humanity to really listen to the events that nature presents to us. We are entreated to take care of nature, if not it will hit us hard.

“Our humanness is bonded by our diversities and uniqueness”

ECHOES FROM OFFICIAL GhN MEETINGS

The GhN Province is known as a very active, enterprising and “full-of-life” Province. It is made-up of a great variety of nationalities, of cultural backgrounds and individual charms! Three times a year, the Provincial Council, made up of elected members from the various Apostolic Areas, meet under the leadership of the Provincial Superior. For four or five days they share and discuss about the “State of the Province”, listen to Reports, deliberate about “the following steps to be taken”, evaluate what has been happening in the Province since their last meeting, and look for solutions to community or individual problems. It is also the responsibility of the P.C. to consider the applications received from Candidates to be allowed to take “the next step of formation”, or to be admitted as full members of the Society by taking the Missionary Oath. For the majority of these, this process will be concluded by their application to be admitted to the Order of the Presbyterate.

All such meetings are minuted in detail, and whatever is non-confidential is shared with all the members of the Province. So there is no need to repeat everything in the Link. However, in this article I simply wish to choose a few important points from the January 2020 Provincial Council Meeting, which maybe some of us have already forgotten!

Possibly the most important point discussed, was the question of personnel: how are we able to maintain viable communities of three, when faced with a shortage of “manpower”? Let me quote from the non-confidential Minutes: “After a lot of further discussion on how to deal with this precarious situation, the Council came to the conclusion that, if we wish to protect the golden rule of three and keep our communities viable, we MUST indeed give up something. And so the Council took the decision to hand back one of the Parishes to the Local Church. The Provincial will discuss the matter with those concerned as soon as possible. Once these discussions have borne fruit, all the confreres will be informed immediately about the implications of the above decision for the Local Church and for the confreres who may get a new appointment.” (p. 8). Though at present, the necessary discussions are indeed taking place, no firm and precise conclusions can yet be presented.

GhN is made up of two different parts: Nigeria and Ghana. Nigeria has a Provincial Delegate to take care of every-day events. He calls Sector Meetings at the appropriate times, which as many confreres of the Sector as possible attend. In the PC



Caption describing picture or graphic.

meeting the question was raised why Ghana should be different. This is what the Minutes say about it: “should Ghana have its own Sector Meetings? The question whether there is a real wish and need for this should first be answered, before adding a new structure for the Province. The easiest

“The GhN Province is known as a very active, enterprising and “full-of-life” Province. “

way to find the answer to this question is by consultation. The Apostolic Areas are therefore invited to discuss this matter, with the respective Councillors presenting the answer to the next P.C. As the present Statutes of the Province are valid until 30th June 2020, it would provide an opportunity to insert the Ghana Sector Meeting, if indeed this is what the

confreres want.” (p. 14). This may be a timely reminder to all confreres to discuss not only this matter seriously, because any new approach will have to be entered into the Revised Statutes, but even all the articles of the present Statutes!!

Elsewhere in this issue, information will be given about “goings and comings” of confreres, stagiaires and candidates. Here we just wish to look back to last year, when three of our candidates from Nigeria provisionally appointed to Arusha for the Spiritual Year 2019-2020, did not obtain a visa for Tanzania. On p. 4 of the Minutes of the January P.C. Meeting we read: “As we all know, three of these ‘future novices’ (from Nigeria) did not get a visa for Tanzania, and are now in PAO, learning French and getting ready for the Bobo Dioulasso Spiritual Year of 2020-2021. They are doing well.”

At the time of the January P.C. Meeting, Covid-19, was still very far away. Plans were being made for 2020 meetings and events, organised by either Committees, Commissions or individuals. The P.C. reminded them “that there should be as much dialogue as possible with especially the Provincial regarding dates of meetings, so as to avoid clashing of dates. Once agreed upon, these dates should be communicated to all concerned, and well in advance. To foster greater communication, all commissions are reminded that they should always send the Minutes of their meetings to the Provincial”. (p. 9). But only the Media Commission succeeded in having their meeting days in Tamale, led by Brother Vitus Abobo. Then the coronavirus prevented all other meetings to take place, such as the one planned for the end of May in Wa, as we read on p. 8 of the Minutes: “The 2020 Provincial Workshop with as theme Conflict Resolution for a peaceful Cohabitation/coexistence will be held in Wa from 27-30 May, which 60 persons are expected to attend.” Of course, also the P.C. meeting of April fell victim to corona!!

Continued

I wish to end with another important issue that emerged from the P.C. and concerns our financial health. On p. 9 this is what we read: "The Treasurer stressed the need for communities to search for income. This can be done for instance by submitting requests to funding agencies, such as MIVA for transport. He also proposed that the allocation to communities be given quarterly. This implies that requests for direct transfers must reach him before the 10th of the first month of each quarter. He appealed to treasurers to always give their successor proper hand-over notes. As all use now the Banana accounting programme, this should be easy." Whatever we do, let us never "go bananas"!!!

We will keep you informed of such matters through the GhN Link, once normalcy has returned and meetings can be held without disturbance or face-masks!!

André Schaminée

GhN Provincial Secretary

Provincial Council of Ghana-Nigeria Province



From Backline to Frontline: John Mubanga, John Abobo, André Schaminée, Amani B. Dieudonné, Chileshe Christopher, Songre Pierre, John Aserbire, Cirimwami K. Gaspard, Rukundo Gilbert & Mambwe Emmanuel

NEWS FROM THE PROVINCE

Confreres and Candidates Stuck Due to Covid 19

Our sympathies go out to our final-year stagiaires, Barthelemy, Pierre, Balthazard and Jean-Paul, who have not yet been able to return to their countries Burundi and RDC for a well-deserved holiday in preparation for the final phase of formation. And of course there are the final-year stagiaires originating from our Province and having their stage elsewhere, who are also unable to return home. We think of Patrick in RDC, Simon in Spain, Godwin in Burundi, Jacob in Zambia, Luke in Tanzania, Stephen Paul in RDC, David in Ivory Coast, Michael in Malawi and Emmanuel in Niger.

Also “stuck” are Piet de Bekker (Ibadan) who was finally given the green light by the doctors to return to Nigeria, but then was blocked by Covid-19, and Christopher Nkandu (Savelugu), who had returned to Zambia for the funeral of his sister. Both are eagerly and impatiently waiting for “better times”. Two confreres now in our Province are scheduled to leave for other pastures: Erus Tirkey (Bolgatanga-Soe) has been appointed back to SOA, the Section of Asia, but at this moment there is no chance for him to take up this appointment. Victor Shehu (Minna) will soon (??) begin a sabbatical in Kenya, in preparation for a new appointment. Finally, let us not forget Vitus Abobo, who is also looking forward to the day when he can return to Malawi, as his official home leave is already over for some time

“Stuck”, but in his own country, is Deacon Richard Abobopuo (Wa), whose priestly ordination had been scheduled for 16th May, but... this event too had to be postponed till an as yet unknown later date due to Covid-19. He is also still waiting for a visa for Ethiopia.

Appointment of Confreres and Candidates

The following young confreres are appointed to the Ghana-Nigeria Province for their First Term of Mission Alain Sossou from Ivory Coast (appointed to Nigeria, and already there), Edmond Ouedraogo from Burkina Faso, Vincent de Paul Wanok from RDC, Norbert Issa Iluba from RDC and Louis Niyondanga from Burundi. Once the next P.C. takes place, the place of their appointments will be finalised, and the moment that Covid-19 is no more blocking the runway, they can take off!!

Our Province also looks forward to the young men who are appointed for their two-year Stage among us. They are: Evodius Thomas Lihiru from Tanzania, Wilfrid Kinda Paminéwendé from Burkina Faso, Gérard Hakizimana from Burundi, Ephrem Bahati Muhindo from RDC and Josaphat Kambale Ndaliko, also from RDC. Welcome to them in advance! Their places of appointments will be known later.

News Continued

Then there are the eight young men who are completing their first phase of formation at Ejisu whose applications for admission to the Spiritual Year have been approved and sent to either Kasama, Arusha or Bobo Dioulasso, depending on where the General Council has provisionally appointed them to. It may be good that we already acquaint ourselves with their names, as hopefully we shall “meet” them again in the years to come. For Kasama: David G. Gyang, Patrick Oluwafemi Ajayi, Solomon Baafaa and Emmanuel E. Ihire; for Arusha: Simon D. Tengbani and Lawrence Idako Yakubu and for Bobo Dioulasso: Immanuel O. Itobi-Onovwa and Frederick Koomson.

Ordinations in 2020

Last, but not least are our five Confreres who have completed their initial formation, whenever it is possible, they shall receive the Priestly Ordination, have a good holiday and take up their First Appointment, as given below.

(01) **AKANLU, Edward Kaba.** He was born on 12th May 1988 in Navrongo, Ghana. He began his M.Afr. formation with the Preparatory Year at Ibadan from 2009-2010, followed by three years in Ejisu (2010-2013). He made his Spiritual Year in Bobo Dioulasso (2013-2014), followed by his stage in Bandiagara, Mali, from 2014-2016. He then was appointed to the final phase of formation to Kinshasa, RDC, where on 7th December 2019 he took the Missionary Oath and was ordained Deacon the following day. He has been appointed to the Province of PAO.

(02) **EKEH, Nelson Chinedu.** He was born on 13th August 1990 in Ikom, Nigeria. He did his Aspirancy Year in Ibadan from 2009-2010, followed by three years in Ejisu, and the spiritual year in Bobo Dioulasso. He did his two years of stage in Goma, DRC, followed by four years of Theology in Jerusalem (2016-2020), where he took his Missionary Oath on 26th November 2019, and was ordained to the Diaconate on 30th November by Michael Cardinal Fitzgerald, M.Afr. He has been appointed to the Province of EAP.

(03) **EWUNTOMAH Paschal Osman.** He was born on 26th March 1989 in Damongo, Ghana. From 2009-2010 he made his Aspirancy at Ibadan, followed by three years of philosophy in Ejisu. He then went for the Spiritual Year (2013-2014) to Bobo Dioulasso. He was sent for his stage to Kigali, Rwanda (2014-2016) and completed his formation in Kinshasa (2016-2020). He took the Missionary Oath on 7th December, and was ordained Deacon the next day. He has been appointed to PAC.

(04) **EZENWEKE, Anthony Ifeanyichukwu.** He was born on 4th September 1988 in Ikom, Nigeria, had his one-year Aspirancy from 2009-2010 in Ibadan and three years of Philosophy in Ejisu (2010-2013). He made his Spiritual Year in Kasama from 2013-2014, and was then appointed for his stage to Tizi Ouzou in Algeria (2014-2016). He then went to Nairobi, Kenya, for the four years of theology (2016-2020), where on 28th September 2019 he took the Missionary Oath and was ordained Deacon. He has been appointed to EAP.

News continued !

- 5) **ABOBOPUO, Dery Richard.** He was born on 26th October 1980 in Damango, Ghana, had his three years of Philosophy in Ejisu (2009-2012). He made his Spiritual Year in Arusha from 2012-2013, and was then appointed for his stage to Mzuzu in Malawi (2013-2015). He then went to Nairobi, Kenya, for the four years of theology (2015-2019), where on 23rd April 2019 he took the Missionary Oath and was ordained Deacon. On 11th May 2019 He has been appointed to Ethiopia. But as even up to date he has not succeeded in getting the required visa, he is offering his diaconal services to St. Benedict's Parish in Wa.

In anticipation, we congratulate our five brothers with their forthcoming priestly ordination, no doubt a very important point in their missionary life, and we hope and pray that each one of them will be

able to offer a good, enthusiastic and committed service to the Mission for many, many years to come

Condolences

On behalf of all editors and readers of the GhN Link, we wish to express, our deepest sympathy to the quite many confreres who, since the beginning of the year, lost a beloved one, either from his family, or from among his friends. Allow us to just name a few of these confreres,

- ☐ **Pierre Songre**, who in a very, very short time lost both a nephew (Aristide Songre) and a brother (Herve Songre), on 15th March and 4th April, respectively.
- ☐ **Christopher Nkandu**, who lost his sister on 7th March. At the moment, Christopher is still in Zambia; he cannot travel back to Ghana due to Covid 19 pandemic.
- ☐ **Virgilius Kawama**, who recently lost his niece, Naomi Kawama, on 28th April.

To all those who mourned or are still mourning, surely you feel comforted and consoled by what Easter is essentially about, the Feast of New Life. At last, we cannot forget to pray for the soul of Mrs Winfred, who at her time of death on 19th February was working at the Provincial house in Tamale, Ghana. May her soul and of all the faithful departed rest in eternal peace of our loving Lord Jesus Christ!

Amen.



**CONGRATUIONS
DEACONS**



TO OUR



From top right to bottom left: Anthony Ifeanyichukwu Ezenweke, Paschal Osman Ewuntomah, Richard Dery Abobopuo, Edward Kaba Akanlu and Nelson Chinedu Ekeh

SPREAD CALM, NOT FEAR !!!!!!!!!!!!!



By Peter Uche

Human beings have given rational explanations and myths concerning the dogma on suffering. Why do human beings suffer? Who caused it? What have we done wrong? Or what have been the ever constant determinants of this suffering? It is important to

note that so many have given explanations and yet others would criticize it with current and concrete claims. Would there be any valid and universal explanation to the reason of human suffering so that we can reference and reorganize our steps? Yes of course. But, we can only have opinions and hope that they are true because the significance of knowledge is determined contextually in time. It is believed that humans have always desired happiness and this is good. However, this quest for happiness could lead to suffering because it is intertwined with difficulties, misplaced priorities, the insatiability in our desire for happiness channeled wrongly and especially the unclear distinctions between parallels. For example; love and desire, truths and facts, the Corona Virus and the fear of the Corona Virus etc.

But, what could be the cause of the Corona Virus? How can we in this modern time - where truth seems to be relative - understand the truth of this pandemic? Or should we be contemplating on the message this pandemic has for us?

The advent of the pandemic was assumed to be far away by many until it became imminent. Then, people began to execute stringent measures against this virus. The measures executed have become a cause of suffering and fear. Science and Religion try to give explanations concerning the cause of the pandemic, COVID-19. Varying reports of medical experts have said that it is either contracted from animals, man-made or natural. Religious views have given varying and yet contradictory views of the reasons for this pandemic. But, the most radical is that God orchestrated this pandemic to show the world that He is still in control. Could this be true? Will the Almighty God do such an evil act? God being goodness itself, would He do this? Does it not contradict His nature? Or rather have we done or neglected something

which has invited this tragedy?

Yes, we have. Humans have clearly failed in nurturing the environment and imbibing personal hygiene over time. We have been taught from our infancy that cleanliness is next to godliness. Imagine a house where hygiene is not practiced regularly, what would become of it? And what would not have ensued if proper hygienic procedures were maintained? We have been given the task to nurture nature, at least it is rational and responsible to think so. But, have we really fulfilled this obligation? Personally, I concur that the Corona Virus is the ripple effect of the inappropriate actions of the human free will against nature.

Could it be that nature in her own way is making us to be cognizant of our

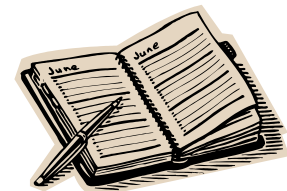
“We are the world’s solution to the world’s problems”

complacency and indifference? Ever since the dawn of the Corona Virus environmental pollution drastically reduced. Could it be a good sign?

I sincerely implore us to be radical in our reflections in order to propagate pragmatic ways of averting these tragic recurrences like the Spanish Flu, the great plague of Marseille, the cholera Pandemic and Ebola. Rather than think that the world is ending or that God is punishing us. Christians, Muslims et al. should be certain about who God is but if we cannot be, then we must be convinced, beyond

reasonable doubt, about who he is not. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, God is not evil and does not orchestrate evil and in the Holy Scriptures the same assertion is made (Cf. The New Jerusalem Bible, Ps. 107:1 and 1 Cor. 10:13). We should rather foster hope and look for ways to salvage the situation and not spread fear. Because, the fear of the end might be more severe than that of the Corona Virus.

Be it as it may, Descartes opined that, “The Good sense is the best distributed thing in the world ... for it is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to apply it well”. We have willingly neglected the environment, therefore, we can and we must willingly nurture the world.



God is not evil and does not orchestrate evil

COVID 19 AND ITS CHALLENGES; A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE



By Nwakpa Sunday Michael

The history of humanity has been plagued by all kinds of calamities, resulting from natural disasters, man-made disasters, hatred for one another and many others. Many scholars and philosophers have been wondering why there is so much evil and disorderliness in the world since everything created by God is said to be good. The problem of evil is commonly seen as the problem of how the existence of God can be reconciled with the pain, sickness, suffering, and moral evil which we know to be facts of life today.

The Corona Virus was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic disease early this year. This was as a result of how deadly and fast this virus can be transmitted or spread from one person to another unknowingly. The corona virus is a virus that affects the human lungs

and causes shortness of breath. The infected person can easily die within the shortest period of time if proper attention is not given to the person. It was believed that this virus has been in existence before. It is causing a lot of harm to the society. There are continuous controversies regarding its origin. Some persons believe that it is natural, while others believe that it is created by the Chinese. From the fruit of their vision, many prophets and pastors in Africa came out with the view that this pandemic is the

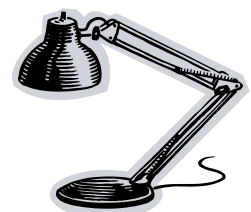
“Many scholars and philosophers have been wondering why there is so much evil and disorderliness in the world since everything created by God is said to be good.”

crystal sign of the end time. Many got convinced about this ideology, which has created fear and panic. These are some of the reasons people use as the means to explain the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19. However, this pandemic has created negative impact on our society. It has affected the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ which is the center of Christian faith, because

every church activity has been put on hold. Since the virus spreads through social contact, the church is advised to stop any church activity involving more than 25 people as a means to curb the spread of this pandemic. The cessation of church activities has crippled the faith of many Christians. For it is a period that people need to express their faith, as they journey with Christ in His triumph over death into glory; because individual faith is not quarantined, they still hold and practice their faith through meditative and contemplative prayer.

In addition, the pandemic has not only affected the church but also, it has leashed its anger on our economy. Many countries have suffered economic regression due to this virus. These countries have spent billions of dollars, all in the name of fighting the corona virus, yet there has not been any fruitful result. It is unfortunate that these monies which would have been used for other useful things for the development of human society now need to be spent to fight this man-made disaster. This virus has created sufferings in the society especially now when there is lockdown, and the market women cannot move out to make sales. This has brought tension in families since parents and guardians can no longer provide the needs of their children. It also serves as an avenue for more exploitation and cheats in some countries. Many commodities have increased in price, especially some of the items used in curbing the spread of this virus such as soap, sanitizers, nose masks etc.

Furthermore, in a country like Nigeria where proper attention is not given to situations especially when they do not affect the political leaders, there is no visible political will to fight against them. People should remember that this virus does not exempt anybody, the rich and the poor alike. Everybody is liable to be infected by the virus. The worst of it all is that the political leaders can no longer fly out of the country to receive special medical treatment, or do business transactions, since the virus has restricted movement. The virus has put the world in a perpetual fear and despair, nothing seems to be interesting again, people are isolated, schools, organizations and public institutions are closed down. It is obvious that the COVID-19 tends to escape human knowledge and understanding. People raised questions as to how, when and why it should happen. This shows that the ways of God are really different from ours. Therefore, it is for us to obediently and joyfully, with inner freedom, to accept



The pandemic is the crystal sign of the end time.

Continued on the next page !

Continued from Page 19

situations and influences which tend to escape beyond our control, whether they favour our growth or seem to hinder it. Using human reason, our only desire should always be to serve God, trusting in His wisdom, power and love to give us what is best for us. Due to the incomprehensiveness of this COVID-19, it has reawakened the consciousness of God in people's mind.

It is high time for us to invoke our Faith and Reason to face COVID-19's challenges.

In conclusion, personal hygiene is said to be the best way of fighting against any infection. Coupled with the directives from the World Health Organization (WHO), people are advised to always wash their hands under running water with soap and make constant use of sanitizers. Since the virus spreads through body contact, people are encouraged to always cover their mouths when coughing or sneezing and stay at home as a way of controlling the spread of the virus. Another measure that has been enforced by our leaders in some countries is the closing of borders and for-

bidding public gatherings until further notice. We, the members of St. Martin of Tours Formation House, have also adopted these measures or directives as the means of curbing the spread of the virus.



LIFE UNDER LOCKDOWN AT ST CLEMENT FORMATION HOUSE



BROTHERS ARE ALSO APOSTLES!

At the eve of the 2016 Chapter and before the inauguration of the 150th Anniversary of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, questions rose from some brothers and some priests Missionaries of Africa about vocation to brotherhood in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa/White Fathers. "Do we still need brothers?" seemed the straightest question to express the issue at hand. It was debated in the Chapter and, the formation of brother candidates is still a debate. Though my aim is not to solve the above issue, I still think that the other question could be; why questions rose after living and working together brothers and priests for over 150 years?

The history of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa has a lot to say about the achievements of brothers in the past, and leads to the relevance of their vocation in our time. Of course, the question of the relevance presupposed a positive response that is why it was followed by the debate about formation of Missionaries of Africa brothers. I strongly believe that to an extent, the reforms on the formation of Missionaries of Africa brothers necessarily imply the reform of the formation of their counterpart clergy because they come from the same source, live in the same communities, carry out the same mission each one according to his vocation within the same context and charism!

I am afraid the recent emphasis of professional formation of Missionaries of Africa brother candidates in both first and fourth phases could jeopardise our communities and our mission.

In fact, the vocation to brotherhood is not an invention of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. There are other congregations that have brothers and clergy and function according to the Law of the Church. Other congregations of brothers exist and still respond to the needs of the Church in the world today according to their respective charisms. Their formation guarantees efficient response within their charism in the Church. It follows that, before going far in our debates about the formation of the brothers, we need to consult our history, the church and other congregations or Societies of apostolic life. The formation of the Missionaries of Africa candidates should foresee the response to the challenges of the missionary territories where we work. As I mentioned above, it would mean a sort of adjournment of the formation of their counterpart priests.

I am afraid the recent emphasis of professional formation of Missionaries of Africa brother candidates in both first and fourth phases could jeopardize our communities and our mission. I do not

imagine that some assignment will be created for professional brothers in some of our communities which in the future cannot be carried out by others confreres who did not go through the same training! That is why our charism should remain the signpost of the reform at hand. I want to image for instance a brother starting an IT workshop in a Parish today, and when he is transferred tomorrow the workshop will close! Many other things like that could happen too! Similarly, I want to image a brother who never came across philosophy, who has little understanding of theology, no idea of missiology and canon Law, ignorant of ecclesiology and the only catechism training he underwent is of the time of his confirmation, being appointed to mission in a Parish. In this context, apart from the expertise in some secular subjects he could be a good community man trained for community life, but he could be less efficient than a trained catechist as far as mission is concerned! Don't brothers of other congregations follow religious studies and other ecclesiastic sciences before going for mission? Therefore, if we are apostles, apostolic training should precede specialization in secular subjects.

What is wrong with philosophical and theological knowledge which are provided in our first and fourth phase? Who says that Missionaries of Africa brothers cannot specialize in philosophy and sacred sciences if indeed they are to be apostles according to the initial idea of the founder: "be apostles, nothing but apostles".

We need to watch out for limitations of specialization without a sound knowledge of the Church and her mission! If care is not taken, some brothers could be frustrated whenever they will be to work in parish set up and will realize that they were not trained for parish pastoral work. In fact some of confrere priests could be little them repeatedly underlining that they know nothing about the mission of the church. Thence, it cannot be over emphasized that the Missionaries of Africa brothers, are not only catholic brothers and missionaries, but like their counter part clergy, they are apostles. Therefore the formation of the Missionaries of Africa brothers should always aim at forming apostles for and in the Catholic Church while the specialization will add to what they already are: "Apostles".



Do we still need brothers ?”



By Fr. Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr.

RETHINK OUR APOSTOLATE IN THE WORLD TODAY



Missionary Society of Apostolic life 'ad extra and ad gentes'

However, the aforementioned booklet recalls that living in community of three which is the ideal Missionaries of Africa community has always been a challenge throughout the history of the Society. No wonder that even at the 150th anniversary, the community building remains a challenge. Of course ideal and perfection is not human, therefore the Society will have to continue to strive to achieve it. Nonetheless, it seems that one of obstacles of forming such communities lies between apostolic demands, decisions of the General Chapters and lack of personnel. If Jesus himself said that 'the harvest is abundant but labourers are few', how can the Society of the Missionaries of Africa escape that reality?

For the Missionaries of Africa, the issue of personnel is very pertinent! Across Africa some communities have been closed because of personnel, others have been opened with the same personnel! It is as if though many communities could close today, for one reason or the other, the problem would still surface tomorrow, because it seems to be the reality of mission! Recently, Ghana-Nigeria Province resolved to close one community in view of strengthening others in terms of personnel; the history will tell us how soon a new community will be opened in the province! And the time will tell how long it will take to maintain the community of three! All in all, I think that the Society needs to be careful about community opening and closing so that the personnel issue does not turn to be a paradox of vicious circles.

Though the relevance of the community life cannot be over emphasised, some excesses also should be curbed! From the foundation till now the context of missionary sustenance has changed: We have communities in villages and towns in Africa and Africa world. The history tells us that among the first missionaries the issues of fundraising in Europe was part and parcel of missionary activities. Some were literally beggars for the sake of mission in Africa. The above effort was supported by many benefactors who made missionaries to worry less about their self sustenance to focus on mission. Nowadays everything has changed! The tomorrow of the Society concerns all members without exception. Unfortunately, it looks like the fi-

The Society of the Missionaries of Africa was founded to be a Missionary Society of Apostolic life 'ad extra and ad gentes' living community life. The community has always been the backbone of the life and apostolate of the Missionaries of Africa. As it is recalled in the booklet "LIVING OUR CHARISM TODAY", the community life is so important that rather than abandoning it, the Society could rather be disbanded!"

nancial situation at all levels changed drastically but the mentality of fundraising and self sustenance seems not to have changed much. Many confreres still feel that the Society should finance community and pastoral budgets whereas the leaders at high level seem to point at the impossibility of such sustenance! Gradually, the confreres are to rely on the provision of the local Churches where they work.

2016 General Chapter purchased the idea of establishing development committees to coordinate the fundraising for mission at all levels: a book-

"To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here."

let on development was prepared and distributed, the workshops in Uganda and Burkina Faso were organised at the expenses of the Society, in some provinces delegates to the development office were appointed, meetings and workshops were held in many parts of our provinces, rest to know how far the Development committees in their productivi-

ty have improved the income of the Society in spite of expenses of meetings and workshops almost four years after the Chapter!

The contrast of the community life and self sustenance remained a challenge for the 2016 General Chapter. Our forefathers were equipped to face the challenges of their times through the work of their hands. They were able to build schools, hospitals, workshops without neglecting implanting churches, catechism, formation of clergy, etc. "From bush schools to Justice and Peace Centres, from the earliest dictionaries to cultural research centres, from tree plantations to development centres, from teaching catechism to theological training in Major Seminaries, the missionaries of Africa have constantly sought to translate the parable of the Good Samaritan into practice and answer the question of the lawyer, "and who is my neighbour". Nowadays, many young Missionaries in the field can hardly celebrate Masses in vernacular languages, some get involved in the routine of daily parish life without further creativity, others take siesta twice a day because of 'lack of work' while others seem to carry the load alone or without expected support. In the name of the community of three, a Parish and a pastoral insertion that can be handled by one diocesan priest, we handle it as three and thus some have the privilege to have siesta in the morning, afternoon, evening and long night sleep!

The community life is not guaranteed by the number of the persons in the community, and the successful pastoral work does not necessarily flourish because of the numbers, but the quality of life and organisation. This is where we could venture into using fully our potentials for the sake of Christ, for the good of the Church and the good of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa. Where we succeed to form community of three, we could evaluate the volume of works and get more involved in:

- Teaching moral and religion in schools where it is possible,

Continued on the next page

- Lecturing in Seminaries and High Institutions where they are possibilities,
- Preaching retreats, coordinate workshops, give talks, etc.
- Offer professional counseling, etc.

We all agree that the first resource of the Society is the members, but if members are under used we cannot expect miracles. We could do more to reinvent our future rather than spreading fears that we have no future. We are the future. We can get involved in the aforementioned

activities, without causing prejudice to our charism and our community life. After all, what does a community of 3 young men tell about the sons of Lavigerie when they carry out a responsibility that can be easily handled by one diocesan priest, while expecting the diocese to take care of them all? Is that the reverse of the parable of Jesus where the labourers are more than the harvest in some pastoral fields while the

cry remains in other places where the personnel is a serious issue? The problem of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa is our problem, let us join our hands to reinvent our mission in the African world and beyond at the service of the Church. May the Lord help us.

By Fr. Gilbert Rukundo, M.Afr.



Happy 4th Anniversary to Bishop Richard! Happy Birthday to Damien @ 74!



All our best wishes to Bishop Richard on the 4th anniversary of his episcopal ordination on 7th May and to Fr. Damien on the 74th birthday on 8th May.

THE PROVINCIAL HOUSE COMMUNITY ON COVID 19

1. What are the measures taken by your community to minimize the spread of the Virus?

- **We have taken the recommended actions: a “hand-washing” possibility is set in place at the entry of our property and another one at the entry of the Dining Hall. Also sanitizers and nose-masks were given to every confrere**
- **In the dining hall and chapel we observe the proposed “social distance”.**
- **We also use the “power of prayer” by saying together one of the Free us from the Corona Virus prayers (SECAM and JPIC-ED, Rome).**
- **We have talked to the Cook and put a copy of the General Recommendations of the Ghana Health Service in the kitchen.**

2. How is your community making sure that it is safe from the Virus?

We can't make anything sure!! We can only take appropriate and recommended actions, as explained in the previous answer. We avoid unnecessary trips to town, but of course, we still have to eat and pay our water bills! Even if we go for our walks, we make sure not to come too close a person whom we are passing, meeting or overtaking!! And of course everyone avoids going to crowded places!

3. How has the outbreak affected your community life?

Maybe especially in the way Corona is now a “hot topic of conversation” whenever we are together. It surely dominates the conversation. However, sometimes not all seem to observe the given recommendations

4. What are the measures taken by your diocese against the spread of the virus?

As we all know, churches are closed, meetings and other common activities suspended. Only a few selected people will be present at the Chrism Mass and Easter celebrations in the Cathedral.

5. What are the measures taken by the state government in your place in order to curb the spread of the virus?

See the speeches of the President: for example, a lockdown for Accra/Tema and Kumasi metropolis borders closed; international aviation suspended; compulsory quarantine for those who entered the country, and contact-tracing.

The Provincial House Community

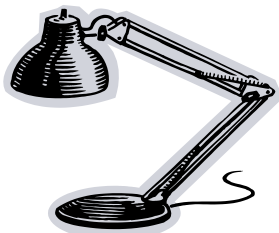
LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT SHEPHERD!

“My anxieties and fears have carry on with the mission of this difficult time of despair everybody is trying to



been of how I can witnessing Jesus in and fear, in which survive”

My fears and anxieties during this pandemic have been around this theme of the good shepherd... how I can demonstrate that there is God out there in this time of fear and despair? How can I show that it is worth believing in God? That religion is still relevant. I am anxious that our parishioners are feeling abandoned by us their pastors. I am anxious of how to convince them that they are safe from the virus, even if I myself am not sure. I am anxious of how I can be of value to the community in these troubled times. I am anxious of what will happen after all this is over I am not only anxious, but also afraid. I am afraid of giving false hopes to the people. I am afraid of how to spread the message of hope among parishioners without making them afraid of what is coming. I am afraid of making them fearful. In short, my anxieties and fears have



Covid 19 has changed the world overnight, at a blink of an eye

been of how to carry on with the mission of witnessing Jesus in this difficult time of despair and fear, in which

everybody is trying to survive. My fears and anxieties have been of how I can still be a shepherd to my people at this point in time.

It was shocking for many of our parishioners to hear that there would be no Palm Sunday celebration, that Good Friday and Easter Sunday liturgies had been cancelled. I remember the youth president of our parish, calling me to find out if this was really true. He asked me: Will the passion play take place or not on Good Friday? He and his colleagues had spent sleepless nights preparing this passion play. He was so sad to hear that the Good Friday liturgy had been cancelled. I am sure, he was not alone, and many of our parishioners were also heartbroken. They did not understand what was going on, they did not believe that a virus could have so much terror to stop those big celebrations from taking place. But the question is who could ever have imagined that this could ever happen in our life time?

Covid 19 has changed the world overnight, at a blink of an eye. In subsequent days and weeks, people kept on calling, asking whether or not this or that church service was going to take place. They had not yet believed that all the church activities were really cancelled. For many there was no need, they did not believe they would catch the virus. I am sorry: up to now some of our parishioners still don't believe that they can catch the virus. For them, the virus is for the town people, not poor farmers. As parishioners kept on knocking at our doors, we also kept on thinking what we could do for them, so that they would not feel abandoned. So that, they would not feel we have left them alone. So that, they wouldn't feel like sheep without shepherds.

I must admit that some parishioners already felt like we had abandoned them. Those who were bold enough expressed this directly to me. Brother you have left us? We no longer see you these days. I felt embarrassed and speechless... It felt as if I were running away from my sheep at a time when they needed me most. It felt like I am running away from them because they had the virus. After discussions at table as a pastoral team, we decided to do something. We agreed that we needed to be extremely prudent in our pastoral approach given that we were foreigners. Hence we were easy targets; any abuse of the measures would cost us gold. We could be punished severely by the authorities, even be evicted from the diocese. As such, we decided to play our cards very well. We had to make sure that our parishioners would not feel abandoned, at the same time we had to respect the measures placed by the authorities and also protect our parishioners from the spread of the virus. Believe you me, this has not been an easy task to do. To strike the balance among those three things is hectic.

In my local language, Chichewa, there is a saying, which goes “*chapitachapita danzi liliribe mankhwala*”. Literally, it means, don't cry for spilled milk. It has spilled off, accept it and move on. I believe, this is what we have been doing. We are already in the hole; the question is how we can continue our mission from the hole, while we are still searching for thecontinued

Continued from page 25

means to come out from it. So, we decided to carry out one church activity at least, Sunday Masses. We observed that our parishioners are not many. Moreover, they are mainly farmers, as such less exposed, since they are always working in their farms. In real sense, they cannot infect, rather can be infected. Someone from outside can bring the virus to them, not really them infecting other people. Given that their movements are very much limited, they are just within their locality.



Secondly, we decided to follow the preventive measures. We sewed masks which we distributed to our parishioners free of charge, and we also bought sanitizers. Everyone before entering the

church is sanitized. Also we follow strictly the directives from the diocese, to keep the Masses short and suspend the rite of

peace. So far, this has been working for us. Our parishioners do not feel completely abandoned. They see us, we meet them. They still believe we are with them, even at this most difficult time when they need us most.

Unfortunately, for us we cannot live-stream our church activities, on Facebook or WhatsApp. We are in a remote area; our people do not use smart phones. So, we have to find what works for us here. At last my fears



have reduced, my anxiety minimized. It makes me happy to see that I can still be a shepherd to my sheep, especially at this time when they need me most. Covid 19 has come, surely sooner or later it will go away, but let our faith, hope, and trust in the loving God last forever! We owe Him at least that!

By John W. Nkhoma

Farewell of George at St Thomas Parish, Agbowo!



Fr George Kambembo has been appointed to St Vincent De Paul Parish, Ogo-Oluwa. Good luck George, the Lord is your strength!



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GHANA/NIGERIA PROVINCIAL MEDIA TEAM GETS A NEW COORDINATOR



GHANA-NIGERIA LINK

The January Provincial Council meeting appointed a new coordinator for its Media Team, in the Person of Jean Claude HABIMANA, currently working in Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese. He is to take over from Serge Boroto.

Although, the provincial, who had appointed Serge to that task, will or has

already thanked him; the Media Team would like also to express its gratitude to Serge. Your dedication and collaboration has taken the communication of the province to a good standard. We promise to keep the fire of communication burning in the province and beyond. Thank you very Much Serge, good luck in your new mission!



SERGE-OUTGOING



**JEAN CLAUDE –
INCOMING**