



SECTION OF ASIA NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2020

Welcome to this edition of the SOA Newsletter in the COVID19 world.

Unless you are living in a totally different world from the rest of humanity, the term COVID19 is well-known. Along with other words like lockdown, quarantine, self-isolation, social distancing and others, which have become part of our day-to-day vocabulary, the COVID19 Pandemic defines much of what our world is experiencing these days. It is, as they say, the “talk of the town”. Face masks and shields are worn for protection and have become part-and-parcel of everyday life.

Our Society of Missionaries of Africa has not been immune and we have had to adjust to the changing and challenging landscape. How we interact with one another in community has been challenged. How we carry out our meetings at different levels of our Society has been challenged. Candidates, who completed their Spiritual Year, had to wait until they could gradually move to their places of Stage. Those who had completed Stage were delayed in returning home for their holidays before moving to their respective places for Theology studies. Ordinations that were planned months before had to be re-scheduled with a reduced number of those who could attend. In general, our normal way of doing things has been challenged and adjustments needed to be made.

Within our own little corner of our Society, we have not escaped the bite of COVID19. Confreres and candidates were stranded in places, unable to move due to travel restrictions and the closing down of International air travel. Ordinations were postponed. In India, ways and means had to be found to get our students back to our formation centre in Bangalore to start the new academic year. Our students at Suvidya college in India and the University of San Carlos in the Philippines currently follow courses via Internet. Our communities both in the Philippines and in India have undergone different versions of lockdowns and quarantines and it has not ended.

The reality is, COVID19 is in our midst and it does not look like it will disappear anytime soon. It is something we have to learn to live with, which has wide ranging effects from economics to the way we relate with one another through social distancing. The positive news is that many people are working hard to bring this pandemic under control.

There is no denying that our world is changing and we, as individuals and as a Society, need to change with it. We need to do whatever we can to protect ourselves, our communities, and the people around us. However, life must continue. We must face the challenges ahead of us with hope both as individuals and as a Society.

“I have hope in the peoples” of the world who “are going to take lessons from this crisis to re-evaluate their lives. We’re going to come out better. Fewer of us, of course, many are still sick and it’s hard. But I have faith, we’re going to come out better,” (Pope Francis - March 25, 2020)

AN EXTENDED STAY IN THE PHILIPPINES



On 25 February 2020, **FR. FRANCIS BARNES**, First Assistant General, arrived in the Philippines to visit the communities of Cebu and Malalag. Following this visit, he was foreseen to travel with John Gould, Superior of the Section of Asia, to India to visit the communities of Bangalore and Sollepuram. However, COVID19 had other ideas.

Like many other people, Francis found himself stranded in the Philippines, unable to travel to India or to travel back to Rome. In the Philippines, the Emergency Community Quarantine (better known elsewhere as a lock-down), shut everything down. Adjustments had to be made and Francis had to find ways of making the best of a difficult situation. He kept in contact with the other members of the General Council, who were in similar situations in different places in Africa, via video conferences. Even COVID19 could not stop the work of the General Council! While unable to go to any of the shopping malls, Francis had his daily walks within the Village of Sto. Nino, where we have our community, as well as the opportunity to experience the food of the Philippines. He gave some inputs to our students and joined our community for prayer as well as social activities and recreation. Francis was finally able to travel back to Rome of 14 August 2020. This extended visit was unexpected both for Francis and the community, but we hope he enjoyed his stay with us. We thank him for his presence in our community and for sharing some insights into the wider aspects of our Society. We thank him and all the members of our General Council for the work they do behind the scenes to ensure our Society runs as efficiently as possible even in the midst of difficult times. Francis is most welcome to return to the Philippines for a much longer (and more permanent) stay following his term as a member of the General Council.



“...We need to rediscover the concreteness of small things, the small acts of kindness shown to those who are close to us, family, friends. We need to realize that our treasure lies in small things. There are tiny gestures that sometimes get lost in the routine of everyday life, gestures of tenderness, affection, compassion, that are nevertheless decisive, important... Even those who have not yet met God, those who do not have the gift of faith, can find their way through the good things that they believe in. They can find strength in their love for their children, their family, their brothers and sisters. Someone might say: ‘I cannot pray because I do not believe’. But at the same time, we can believe in the love of the people we have around us, and there we can find hope...” (Pope Francis on Dealing with the COVID19)

APPOINTMENTS—CALLS

At a meeting of the General Council via video conference on 12 June 2020, the Superior General, following a deliberative vote of his Council, made the following appointments within the Section of Asia:

Fr. FILIYANUS EKKA as rector of the First Phase Formation Centre in Bangalore, India.

Fr. PAUL JOHNSTON as rector of the First Phase Formation Centre in Cebu, the Philippines.

Both appointments are for a period of three years commencing on 1 August 2020.

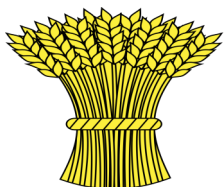
We thank Filiyanus and Paul for their availability and for accepting these new appointments.

SILVER JUBILEE OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION



Paul with the SABS Sisters in
Bangalore

Ordained in his home parish of St. Anne in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, we congratulate **FR. PAUL JOHNSTON** on his 25th anniversary of Priestly Ordination on 27th August 2020. Since his ordination, Paul has been in South Africa, Ireland, Ghana, Zambia, India and the Philippines (now for a second time). He has been a formator in our Society since 2001. Unable to return to Canada for the anniversary celebration, a simple but joyful celebration was held in the formation centre in Cebu to mark the occasion. Paul thanks all who have supported him for the past 25 years.



PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS



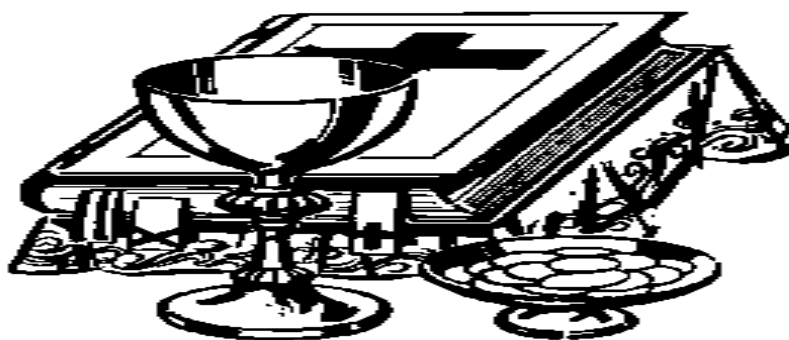
On Wednesday, 28th October 2020, in Banspatra Parish, **NITEESH EKKA** was ordained by Bishop Emmanuel Kerketta, Bishop of Jashpur Diocese at a simple celebration in the presence of family members and the small group of family and friends that was limited due to the COVID pandemic. A Mass of thanksgiving was held at his home in Saliyatoli. Fr. Filiyanus Ekka, the vocation animator for India, represented our Society at the celebration. We thank the family of our brother Niteesh and all who supported him on his journey. Following a period at home, Niteesh is appointed to Kasama Parish, Zambia for his first term of mission.



Following a number of delays and postponements, **RAJESH KALAPALA** was ordained to the priesthood in Amalodbhavi Maatha Cathedral, Eluru, India on Wednesday, 25 November 2020. The ordaining Bishop was Most Rev Jaya Rao Polimera, DD., Bishop of Eluru. His Mass of Thanksgiving was celebrated on 26 November 2020. Frs. Filiyanus Ekka and Bipin Kerketta represented the Society of Missionaries of Africa. Due to CORONA Virus restrictions, only a few members of the family of Rajesh were able to attend the celebration. More details concerning the First Mass will be forthcoming as details are received. Rajesh is appointed to PAC

Frs. Filiyanus, Rajesh and Bipin for his first term of mission.

HALEN KERKETTA, currently doing his deaconate ministry in Mua Parish, Malawi., is expected to return to India on 20th November 2020 to be with his family in Ranchi prior to his priestly ordination, which is set for 18th January 2021 at St. Francis Xavier Church, Dokapath in the Diocese of Gumia-Jharkand.





EXPECTED ARRIVALS IN SOA



SIJO BABY, upon completion of his diaconate ministry in Bunia, DRC, will return to India to prepare for his ordination, the date for which is still to be set. He has already been appointed to PAC for his first term of mission.

Following a period of time in India to accompany a sick confrere, **BENJAMIN BABY** returned to his community in Zinder, Ivory Coast, to complete his mandate. He hopes to return to India on 19th December 2020. He will initially take a well-deserved break with his family before joining the formation community in Bangalore.

We are still waiting for further news of **TRAN VINCENT NGUYEN**, concerning his arrival in the Section of Asia to start the project in Vietnam. Currently, Tran is still in Germany. His arrival in Vietnam is being delayed due to visa issues as Vietnam is currently closed to everyone except wealthy businessmen and diplomats. We look forward to welcoming him to our Section.

EXPECTED DEPARTURES FROM SOA

BIMAL LAKRA, currently in the Aspirancy community in Sollepuram, India, has been appointed to Tanzania for his first term of mission. Assuming all goes according to plan, he depart from India on 28th November to arrive in Tanzania on 30th November.

LUISITO POE, currently in the formation community of Cebu, the Philippines, is waiting for his visa application for Canada to be approved. All going well, he should be travelling to Canada either at the end of the current year or early next year.

WE WISH ALL THOSE LEAVING THE SECTION A SAFE JOURNEY AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING THOSE ARRIVING.



Villaseñor Sergio	August	1
Contamina Ryan	August	15
Puthenpurackal Sabu	September	3
Johnston Paul	September	12
Singarajan Johnson	October	2
Dela Cerna Jurey James	October	11
Caputolan Clayb Estano	October	17
Dominic Shiby	October	26
Filiyanus Ekka	October	26
Maria Joseph Leo L.	November	19
Tirkey Erus Kishor	December	2
Gould John	December	8

PLEASE NOTE: THE DATES OF THE BIRTHDAYS ABOVE ARE ACCORDING TO THE PERSONNEL DIRECTORY OF THE SOCIETY. IF THERE ARE ANY CORRECTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY IN ROME TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CORRECTIONS.

**CONGRATULATIONS AND FAREWELL
TO BONAVENTURE GUBAZIRE (D.Phil)**

FR. BONAVENTURE GUBAZIRE, better known to us simply as Bona, arrived in the Philippines on 12 June, 2016 where he was appointed by the General Council to follow the course leading to a Doctorate in Philosophy through the University of San Carlos (USC), near our formation community in Cebu. For four years, he worked hard and successfully completed his studies in September 2020. He is now officially Rev. Fr. Dr. Bonaventure Gubazire, D. Phil.

While in our community, he helped in the formation of our students and in the different activities of our community. He served as one of the councillors of the Section of Asia and, for one year, accepted the responsibility as Rector of the formation centre. We thank him for undertaking these responsibilities despite his heavy study load.



On Sunday, 4 October 2020, a farewell Mass was celebrated in our community to which a select group of friends of the Missionaries of Africa, as well as some of the teachers and classmates of Bonaventure, were invited. Their presence was a visible witness to the impact Bona made during his time in the Philippines, not only in our community but in the lives of the people he encountered. His presence will be missed by many.

On Tuesday, 6 October 2020, we had a community BBQ as our personal farewell to Bonaventure. It was our time to thank Bona for his presence in our community and for the many ways he enriched us. We thank him for the example he showed to our candidates.



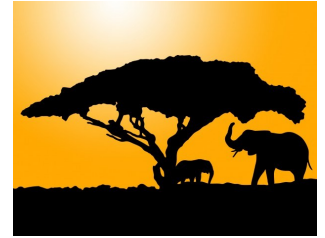
Bonaventure left our community on Thursday, 8 October 2020. His first stop was Uganda where he is presently spending a well-deserved time with his family. Following a time of rest, Dr. Bona will join our formation community in Ejisu in Ghana as a formator and also as a lecturer at the Spiritan Institute, where the Philosophy studies of our students takes place.

We sincerely thank Bona for his availability to our Society and for his openness. We thank him for the different ways he graced our community for the past four years and for his outreach to people around us. We are sure the staff and students in our formation community and at the Spiritan Institute in Ejisu will benefit greatly from his wisdom for the coming years..

CONGRATULATIONS DR. BONA



SPIRITUAL YEAR



Following the successful completion of their First Phase studies in Bangalore, India, **LITHIN VARGHESE** and **ROSHAN LAKRA** left India for the first time on 10 October 2020. Their journey, which was delayed due to COVID19, took them to Kasama, Zambia for the start of their Spiritual Year. They arrived safely and joined their new community of 21 Novices and were officially welcomed into our Society on 18th October 2020 at a celebration presided over by Fr. Benjamin Itungabose, M.Afr., Provincial Delegate for Zambia. We wish them and all the new novices in Kasama and in our other two Spiritual Year centres a prayerful encounter with the Lord as they continue their discernment.

COMMUNITY LIFE IN A COVID WORLD

For the past six months, in the Cebu community, we did what we could to keep ourselves occupied within the given circumstances.

Francis Barnes, the First Assistant General of our Society, became a refugee in our community as he waited for the opportunity to travel back to Rome. He would have liked to go out to visit some of the Malls in Cebu, but this was not possible due to quarantine controls. Bonaventure Gubazire continued to finalize his Doctoral Dissertation, which he successfully completed in October 2020. He is now at home in Uganda with his family. Boris Yabre, appointed here primarily for studies, continues to move toward completion of his studies and hopes to finish next year. Luisito Poe prepared his visa papers that will allow him to travel to Canada at the end of this year to follow a course. He is now anxiously waiting for approval of his visa. Sergio Villaseñor, the bursar of the community, did his best to keep our cupboards full so we could enjoy good meals. He also worked hard in our vegetable garden. Paul Johnston worked on re-arranging our library in preparation for the new academic year and getting himself re-acquainted with the formation house and the beginning of a new academic year. John Gould, our Section Superior, kept things moving with the often-difficult administration of the Section. He was unable to travel to India as originally foreseen. Our students eventually went home for a holiday and returned to start the new academic year under not so normal circumstances. Currently, they are following on-line classes, which may or may not continue into the second semester of the academic year.

As a community, we prayed together and celebrated daily Mass together. We prayed in a particular way for the people around us who were suffering in one way or another from the COVID Pandemic. Some of us kept ourselves moving with evening walks around the village, while others moved their bodies playing table tennis. A few evenings per week, we had recreation. We celebrated anniversaries and birthdays. In many ways, community life is what has helped us during this time of pandemic.

These days, life around Cebu is returning to some sense of normal (or as some say...the new norm). Life is returning to the streets of Cebu. Some “jeepneys”, the local transportation, are being allowed to move once

again, which will be a relief for the people. Most of the shopping malls are open, but with certain protocols, like face masks and face shields, in place. For our community, outside Masses with some of the congregations of sisters have restarted. We have also had some Masses to mark special occasions with a select group of friends.

COVID19 has changed our world! COVID19 has challenged us! However, COVID19 will not defeat us!



MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



Around 6:00 PM, on Wednesday evening, 13 May 2020, the community of Cebu received a phone call informing us that Jean Michault, a good friend of our community and our Society, had been rushed to hospital. Some hours later, around 9:00 PM, a second phone call was received informing us of his death. Jean had a special place in his heart for our Society. He felt at home among us when he came to visit our community. In the days before his death, Fr. Bona brought him Holy Communion and prayed with him. Jean was a man of great faith, who shared his strong faith with those around him. In his final days among us, he was prepared to return to the Father. God granted him 95 years of life on our earth and now he shares that life we all hope for in the Kingdom of God. We thank the Lord for the friendship Jean expressed toward our community and our Society. We pray for his wife, Fele, a Filipina, and his children whom he left behind. His body was cremated on Thursday, 14 May 2020. Due to the COVID19 Pandemic, he ashes are still waiting to be interred in their final resting place. May his soul and the souls of all our faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

In the morning of 4 November 2020, a message was received to inform us that a woman, known to our community and to many others as Mommy Alice had died. She was a long-term member of the lay group that helps our community in different ways. From Thursday, 5 November, to Saturday 7 November, a wake was held at the funeral home where people came to pay their respects and Masses were offered, one of which was celebrated by Fr. Paul from our community. The burial took place on Saturday, 7 November 2020 and was attended by Fr. Luisito of our community.

On the night of 3 November 2020, Concepcion Origenes Galay mother of our confrere Armand Galay, died in Vancouver, in the Province of British Columbia, Canada. She was surrounded by her husband, children the grandchildren. The burial took place in Vancouver, B.C., Canada on 9 November 2020. We extend our prayers to the family and the repose of the soul of Concepcion Origenes Galay.

MAY THESE AND THE SOULS OF ALL OUR FAITHFUL DEPARTED REST IN PEACE.