

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)



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Editor's Word

A little secret. People think that I have a theme for the different editions of the Magazine, whereas in fact I put into the Magazine the articles which are sent to me, then I sit down and wonder what God is trying to tell us through them.



Fr Michael Heap

This time what comes out for me is the joy which can come from being together as Church. God didn't choose people, He chose a People. The People of God are those who share His life and are called to share this life with one another by the way they treat one another and with those who have not yet received this life. In all these articles there are references to not being alone, feeling safe, being welcomed, and so being able to show this love to others. The first thing is to be, and feel, loved. This is what the Church is about. "God so loved the World that He sent his Son." "Looking around at His hearers Jesus said, 'Here are my mother and brothers and sisters.'" According to the old saying, "I can't give what I do not have." It is only when we see that we are loved that we can throw off our defences and share this love with others. But simply saying "God loves you" is not enough. I need to see that I am loved.

Remember the Beatles' song "All the lonely people, where do they all come from"? They are produced by us, when we don't reach out. Smile, speak kindly, visit, encourage, sympathise, commiserate, have patience with those around us. We hear "God is Great" shouted in different parts of the world and it is true, God is Great. But the deeper truth is that "God is Love". We don't need to shout it, we need to live it with gratitude and hope. We read in the Bible that the prophet Elijah stood in front of a cave to meet God. First there was a rushing wind, but God was not in the wind. Then there was a terrible fire but God was not in the fire. Then there was a tremendous earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Finally, there was a gentle whisper. God was in the gentle whisper. This is you and I. Each of us can make God's love alive for others in our own limited way. This is the Mission of each of us. This is the Mission of the Church. This is the Mission of Jesus Christ.

On 29th December 2019, Parfait Pingwende Balma from Burkina Faso took his Missionary Oath and became a Missionary of Africa and the following day, on the Feast of St Andrew, he was ordained deacon in St Anne's Basilica, Jerusalem, after a decade of preparation in various parts of Africa.

“You’ll never walk alone”

This motto of Liverpool Football Club was quoted by Cardinal Michael



Parfait takes his Oath on the Gospels

Fitzgerald in his homily during the Mass of our diac-
onal ordination.

For me, it was a reminder and a re-
assurance. It was a reminder that I have
not been walking alone. During these
years of forma-
tion, I met people

who helped me discern my vocation. At every stage of my formation, I found myself walking along with other people who follow the same path of discernment and together with them we always formed a family.

Of course it has always been a challenge when, at the end of every year, we have had to go our separate ways. Some of us continued in the Society, and were sent to different provinces in Africa or elsewhere to continue our formation or begin new apostolic tasks. Others continued outside the Society, having decided to leave or having been asked to leave. Yet it has always been for me a joyful experience getting to form a new family with new people.



The motto quoted above made me conscious of the fact that in reality I am not walking alone. When taking my oath, I was surrounded by the confreres and candidates in St. Anne's community. In the Basilica during my diaconal ordination, my brother Nelson was ordained together with me, as were the four other brothers who received the ministry of acolyte. Behind me, were my god-mother Chantal and her son Nicolas who clothed me with the stole and the dalmatic, symbols of the Diaconate. There were friends, acquaintances and our brothers from the Salesian seminary who contributed in different ways to make the celebration a memorable one. I truly felt the love and support of all those physically present, as well as those who were far away. I felt the prayers of my family, friends and confreres back home and on mission.

The motto is also a reassurance that I will never walk alone. I am confident that I will always have the support of the Society of Missionaries of Africa, the confreres in my community and beyond the community.



Parfait, Nelson and their brothers in Mission

I will always have the support and prayers of my family and friends and more importantly, I will always enjoy the company of the one who called me to be with Him. I will always walk along with Christ.

So, I will never walk alone.

Parfait Pingwende Balma MAfr.

Commitment and Celebrations in Jerusalem

Over the years I have been privileged to accompany many people as they ponder and search to find what God is calling them to in this life. To happiness and fulfilment, to be sure, but as a Missionary, a married man or woman, a priest or religious, a single lay-person? Last December I was invited to Jerusalem to take part in the celebrations and witness the life commitment of several young men whom I have known. The following photos (kindly supplied by Fr. Adreas Fritsch of the Family of the Work) give something of the atmosphere of joy and hope we experienced during these celebrations. The pictures speak for themselves so I have only added a few words. Enjoy the celebration with us! Editor:



Parfait Balma and Nelson Ekeh stand before the People of God to commit their lives to the Church's Mission in Africa



Hand on the Gospels, Nelson offers his life from this moment forward to spread the Good News amongst the People of Africa.



Parfait, then Nelson sign their Oaths in the presence of their brothers and their superiors.



After years of study and preparation for this day, the final step has been taken.

Two more, generous young people, willing to take the Lord at His word and to risk everything.

“I am with you always”

Nelson and Parfait are committed for life. 4 others have committed themselves to go forward in Formation, and all are supported by the prayers and joy of the religious present.





All that remains that evening is to enjoy in community the food provided by the Sisters of the Work who tirelessly prepare food for generations of students and retreatants in St Anne's Jerusalem. Then after a good night's sleep we move to the Basilica for the Diaconate and Ministries.

First to arrive, the Salesian musicians. Our students study with them at the Salesian College. Thank God, because Missionaries of Africa are not especially renowned for their singing abilities!



Until recently, Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald had been part of the community in Jerusalem. He came back to ordain the 2 deacons and confer the Ministry of Acolyte on the 4 others, all of whom he knows well. A joyful homecoming.



It is not easy for the families of African students to travel for their ordinations. Parfait was overjoyed when his god-mother and her son travelled from France to be with him on his big day.



Nelson's special guests were a young man and 2 religious from St. Vincent's Special Needs School in Jerusalem where Nelson has been working.

As part of their Formation our students work weekly in some charitable organisation and frequently become fast friends with those they meet.



The Nigerian guests begin to arrive, There is quite a large Nigerian community in Tel Aviv, often visited by Nelson. They arrive *en masse* to support their son.



Next come the clergy. Missionaries of Africa, Salesians, friends, lecturers, from all over the world, led by the Cross and those to be made Accolytes. This will be their next step on the way to the priesthood.



Belito from Mozambique, Audace from Burundi, Isac from Burkina, and Thierry from Congo.



Fr. Joe Buholzer, community Superior, Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald, main celebrant, and Fr Manuel Gordjuela, the bursar who makes sure everything runs smoothly. And the Gospels!



The future Deacons are ready, the future Accolytes are present, the congregation full of friends and supporters are seated



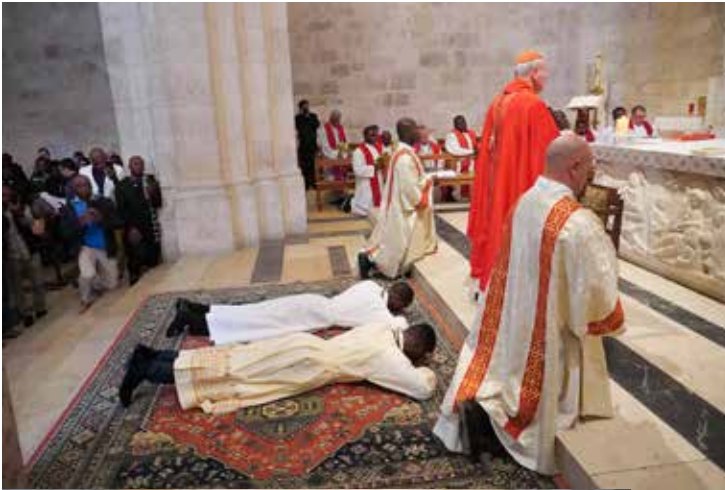
The Salesian choir and orchestra are just waiting to start.



The Acolytes are called one by one and presented with symbols of their ministry. They serve the priest and the People of God during Mass by presenting the bread and wine which will become the Body and Blood of Christ, then purifying the paten and chalice after communion. Tasks often performed by Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist but proper to the Acolyte



The Diaconal Ordination begins. The Deacons are called to kneel and swear obedience to their bishop, whilst putting their hands between his, an old sign of fealty.



The deacons prostrate themselves before the altar.



Everyone in the church joins in singing the Litany of the Saints. The Deacons are to be devoted to serving the Church/ the People of God so it is fitting to ask for the prayers of the saints who are the part of the Church already in Heaven.



The Cardinal prays that the Holy Spirit may come down upon them to consecrate them for service by the laying on of hands as been done since the time of the Apostles



The Deacons are dressed in dalmatics (the liturgical vestments worn by the deacon at Mass) helped by their friends



The Cardinal presents the deacon with a book of the Gospels. His new ministry is to read, believe and preach the Good News.



Some younger members of the congregation begin to get a bit restive, wondering when all these symbols and words are going to finish?



The new acolyte and the new Deacon prepare the gifts



The Deacon incenses the people



The Mass continues



The Children of God are happy





At the end of the Mass Deacon Nelso thanked everyone for their work and their prayers, before doing his final act as deacon by sending forth the congregation with “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord”



The people responded with a heartfelt, “Thanks be to God”. It was time to move on to the next part of the celebration.



Final photo of the clergy.

They wore red vestments for St Andrew’s Day



The celebration continued with music, dances, shared food and laughter as all real African feasts must do.



LEARNING CHICHEWA IN MALAWI

by Michael Ukunola, a Missionary of Africa student from Nigeria

Language is not only a means of communication but also a means of understanding those around us. As a missionary, the first thing I knew I was supposed to do when I arrived in a new environment was to learn the language and the culture of the people, so that I would be able to communicate with them and understand them effectively. So, when I was appointed to Malawi for my pastoral experience, the first thing I did when I arrived was start learning the local language of the people I had been assigned to live and journey with. The people of the area are called the Chewas and their language is Chichewa. The language experience was in two parts, the first was the theoretical and the second was practical. I did the theoretical aspect of the course in one of the parishes in the care of the White Fathers, in Mua. Mua mission was founded in 1902 and it is an ideal place to learn the Chichewa language because of the Kungoni Centre for Arts and Culture which is located there, and also being the cradle of the Chewa culture. Chichewa is a Bantu language.



Michael with some of the family

Since I am from West Africa, it was my first time coming into contact with a Bantu language. It was difficult at first getting to understand the structure of the language. It really was completely different to what I was used to and had imagined.

But the teacher was very patient with me and he helped me to understand the gymnastics of the language. I must say that Chichewa is a very structured, organized and developed language and the people are very proud of

speaking their language. After the language course, I went to stay with a family to practice what I had learnt in class. I had my family experience in a village called Kanjovu, meaning Small Elephant. It is about 15km away from the Mua parish. I was in the family of Mr Patrick Banda. It is a very large family with 10 children. The family is a very loving family. They welcomed me warmly and took me in as one of their own children. The large number of the family was a very big opportunity for me, as no matter what time of the day it was I always had someone to speak with, and I made sure I profited very much from the opportunity. Also, the family has two sources of income: farming and business. I used to go with them to the farm early in the morning, and later in the morning, I would go with them also to the shop where they sell groceries and drinks. Going with them to the farm and also to the shop helped me to learn the language more and to practise it at every moment, because I was always in contact with a lot of people - this, most especially, helped me to learn to use the language in all sorts of situations and with all sorts of people. I learned how to speak with children, with people my own age, with older people, with customers, in very formal situations, etc., etc. These are all different and needed to be learnt if I was to fit in. The family helped me to know and understand the culture of the Chewa



When there is a death, everything stops

people. First they took me to visit the chief of the village – this is a custom that when visitors come to the village, they must first visit the chief, so that the He or She (the chief) is made aware of their presence in the village. I realised also that funerals are a very important aspect of the

Chewa culture, because whenever there is a funeral in the village, every

activity stops – there is no going to the farm or to the market. The whole village, together with the chief, gathers at the house of the deceased person, and they remain there until the person is buried. It is only after the burial that everyone can go about their different activities. I used to go along with the family anytime there was a funeral in the village. I came to be aware of and experience the solidarity that exists among the Chewa people. Apart from the love which I received from the family, the whole Christian community in the village also showed me a great deal of love and acceptance. There is a chapel in the village where I was, belonging to Mua Parish. On the Sunday following my arrival into the village, I was introduced to the Christian community there. One beautiful thing that happened was that the whole Catholic Womens' Organisation (CWO) came to the house where I was staying to welcome me ceremonially into the village, bringing food of all kinds to help the family look after me. There were about 80 women who came to welcome me. It was a very happy day for me, as it was my first time experiencing such love and acceptance, and from such a large group of people. We sang, danced, shook hands, and shared their local drink (Tobwa – made from maize) together. I felt highly elated and this gave me a sense of belonging in the community and the feeling of being safe. Throughout my stay in the village, I had a very happy experience, and this made me more and more fascinated by the language because I was interested in



Michael and the Catholic Womens' Organisation

talking with the people, just as they in turn were also interested in getting to know about where I come from and how things are done differently in Nigeria. This experience is one that I will never forget in my life

and I will always carry the people of Malawi in my heart.

THE 11TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE TANZANIA MOVEMENT OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS (TMCS)

by Fr Fidelis Damana, Vocation Director/Student Chaplain Mbeya Diocese

The Tanzania Movement of Catholic Students (TMCS) is a lay movement that is committed to the evangelization of university and college students.



Banner of the TMCS

This movement is driven by the desire of some Catholic University students to reach out to the poor and the most marginalized in the society. The fundamental orientation of TMCS-Mbeya Zone is the “Preferential option for the Poor”. Apart from the students being agents of evangelization in their various institutions of higher learning, they also show their concern for the poor in the local commu-

nity by their positive influence on the society. The students offer humanitarian services like visiting orphanages, the elderly and the sick in the hospitals. As their contribution to the care of the environment they plant trees and sometimes clean up public places around Mbeya city. TMCS seeks to promote students’ apostolate among students of higher education by emphasizing their responsibilities within the mission of the Church and in the wider society. As TMCS we try to help students deepen their relationship with the person of Jesus, prepare the youth (mostly students) to be responsible citizens and leaders by developing in them a sense of care for the common good and a spirit of readiness to offer themselves for the service of the less privileged in society and inculcating in them the importance of understanding and appreciating their Catholic Faith. The 11th National conference



Dr Tulia Ackson speaking to the assembly

of TMCS was held in the Archdiocese of Mbeya for 5 days and the theme was: **“The transformation of Catholic Youth as protagonists of the new evangelization in Tanzania”**. There were 610 participants from 15 dioceses



The Archbishop and the students

in Tanzania, as well as delegations from Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Congo DRC. The Archbishop of Mbeya, (President of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference), opened the conference with a Eucharistic celebration. The guest of honor was Dr. Tulia Ackson, Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania. Dr Tulia urged the university students to make judicious use of their time and energy in serving God and in preparing themselves for the future. Later there were presentations on “Eucharist and Creation”, “University Students as Agents of Evangelization”, “Youth in Promoting Morality, Justice and Peace in Tanzania”, as well as business opportunities in East Africa, care of the environment and pro life issues. But it was not all serious, we had music, choir, football and volleyball competitions. One day the students paid a charity visit to Nuru orphanage in Mbeya city to meet the orphans and they brought food, soft drinks and clothes for their Christmas and New Year celebrations. The final day of the conference was dedicated to planting trees around the school. This was all a great opportunity for the students to deepen their relationship with Jesus and to share ideas on how better to carry out the task of evangelization in higher Institutions of learning in Eastern and Southern Africa. As the Chaplain of TMCS, I hope that the 11th National conference will propel these students to grow, not just



Fr Fidelis and enthusiastic students

intellectually, but also in human maturity, leadership skills and spiritual development. We want to develop critical thought in their minds and an awareness of belonging to a **“Church of the poor”** as Pope Francis puts it.

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE IN IVORY COAST

by Moses Atsinafe, Nigerian Missionary of Africa student

I was sent to Korhogo in Ivory Coast for a two-years pastoral experience and I would like to share my experience with you. First and foremost, Korhogo is in the North of Ivory Coast and the inhabitants are called Senoufo, of whom the majority are either Muslim or of Traditional African Religion.



Moses outside parish church

The Senoufo are predominantly an agricultural people, their villages consist of small mud brick homes with thatched roofs. I arrived in our parish of Notre Dame de l'Assomption (Our Lady of the Assumption) in Korhogo and on Sunday I was presented to the Catholic community after the Mass. I soon found that a good number of them don't speak French. In addition, the parish is in an area where few people come to church, preferring their traditional practices and beliefs. So, as a way forward, I went to the village of Dokaple to learn the local language. This was where I came into contact with the realities of the people. I encountered a practice called « poro » which is an initiation rite practiced by the Senoufo. The Senoufo are well known for this practice.

There are 2 types of poro initiation. One type is a community poro which is obligatory. It is through this that young people are recognised as members of the community. The second type is private poro and this is optional. It can be likened to some kind of secret society and is esoteric in nature. In Senoufo society, men who have not been introduced to the poro can not speak in public. Women on the other hand have the right to be initiated into the first part of poro before puberty, they then resume this formation after menopause. They also have their own sacred wood where they meet, and



Senoufo mask

this is distinct from men’s sacred wood. The poro can be considered as a “university where each member of society receives, to varying degrees, a complete education” that will make it a “perfect social unit.” Its goal is therefore to create and produce real human beings. Each initiate receives a new name while keeping his civil name. Even though it is now accepted that initiation into community poro is reconcilable with Christianity, this has not always been the case. Indeed, I saw



The Senoufo farmers produce a lot of cotton

poro as an obstacle to evangelization. When I was in the village, accompanied by the catechist who is already initiated, I entered the sacred wood where the initiation to poro took place. This sparked the anger of the traditional chief who thought that I had come to destroy their gods, which caused an outcry. I had to go and ask for pardon, and was seriously warned not to go there again. This practice of poro can be a hindrance to education, so illiteracy is very rampant. After such an experience, I came to believe that private poros, unlike community poros, are not compatible with the Christian religion. On Sundays I used to go to



Moses with parishoners

villages to share the Word of God. Most of those coming to listen to me were women. As a Christian I wanted to show that the love of God means caring for one another. We were a warm, friendly church there and there is much support, love and care expressed behind the scenes in a spontaneous and

informal way. To ensure all are included, and to help us in such a large church, we also have a more structured system of Pastoral Care. This meant doing door-to-door

preaching. It is an approach to evangelism where I went from household to household in a certain area to evangelize residents and get to know how they live. My approach to the people includes my approach to evangelism and is characterized by showing my faith by my actions, in the hope that the people around me would see how God affects my life, and so become Christian, leaving their traditional practices. I developed a strong friendship with the younger people which I hoped was Christ-like. It was my hope that by showing genuine kindness and talking to them about God, eventually that they would see God as their loving Creator. We are told that the process of inculturation “must involve the entire People of God, since the life of the Church as a whole must show forth the faith which is being proclaimed and appropriated”. In practice this means in Korhogo that certain certain areas needed particular attention to help them accept the Gospel within their culture. In-



Senoufo dancer with kora orchestra

culturation of the Gospel and the evangelisation the culture are parts of a living process, which can help the Senoufo people value their culture, and by assimilating it, find meaning in the Gospel. It is an internal process and, as such, it cannot be rushed or forced. It needs care right from



In church with traditional “balafon”

the start, in the same way as an attentive gardener sows good grain, feeds it life-giving water, and supports its growth with a strong cane. I liked these loving, generous and kind Senoufo people who cherish their culture including witchcraft. But I feel that

above all they need education - social, spiritual and cultural. May God bless them.

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Parents & Friends Association
EVENTS

*No information has been received for the moment.
Further information will be included in the next issue of the
Magazine.*

Your charitable prayers are requested

for those who have recently died
and our deceased parents,
relatives, friends and benefactors.



Charles Robinson

Farrington, near Leyland

Desmond Smith

Middlesbrough

Thomas Saxon Archie Burns

Hyde, Manchester

Joan Redmond

Liverpool

We would be very willing to add the names of any readers recently deceased to our list in the Magazine asking for prayers. Please give their name and town.

May they rest in peace



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