

# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

## (WHITE FATHERS)



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Mary  
Queen Of Africa  
Pray for Us.  
Missionaries Of Africa



## Contents

	Page
Editor's Word	3
With the Migrants in Roquetas de Mar	4 - 6
Being a Missionary at Home	7 - 9
Tranquilising Development through Religion	10 - 15
Under Abraham's Tent	16 - 18
We would rather Die from Covid	19 - 21
A Visit to Vietnam	22 - 24
Covid-19 in Tafa Local Government Area	25
Ways to help fund our Mission	26
Data Privacy Notice	27
Parents and Friends	28
Prayers for the Dead	29
Information	30-31
Gift Aid Form	32

## Editor's Word

I invite you to look at the lady on the front of the Magazine. She is radiant. Smiling, dressed in her best clothes, she is ready for life. And yet it is obvious that she has had physical problems. Perhaps very recently she was confined to her house, unable to walk. Like many people in Africa who have suffered accidents or had diseases such as polio, it is probable that in the past she could only crawl about in the dust. Now she is able to



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

get about when and where she wishes. She does not have new legs. Things are not perfect, but she has a new chance in life and she is determined to make the best of it, with dignity. I have no idea what religion the lady follows, if any. Her chance of a new life comes from a wheelchair made in Tamale by Ghanaian workers who, as far as I know are all Muslims. The lady and her family have made the contribution they could afford, but much of the cost was paid by donations from around the world. The workers, who made the wheelchair, were inspired by Br. Trevor Robinson MAfr. working for the Catholic Church in Tamale. Thus this lady has a bright future because of so many different people and she is grasping the chance with both hands. Without her enthusiasm, without the workers, without the donations, but above all, without the inspiration of the Gospel, none of this would have been possible.

In this issue of our Magazine there are stories of hope, stories of idealism, stories of practicalities but behind all of them there is a call to solidarity amongst all people, no matter who they are, and there is the faith that this is not just “pie in the sky” but is achievable in Jesus Christ who prayed, **“That they may all be one”**. God willing, in the UK we are slowly coming out of lockdown and isolation. Things will not be the same as before. They will not be perfect. For so many people there have been great losses, personal, financial, spiritual or professional. Can we set out again smiling and ready for life? Can we trust that not everything depends on us? We need others of no matter what religion or race. But ultimately we need God. Accepting God does not mean there will be no more viruses, difficulties, or deceptions. It does mean that we have someone who is totally trustworthy, who will accompany us along any roads we travel and who says to us, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the world”**.

Let us make the best we can of this world with a smile. Let us be an inspiration for anyone and everyone because Christ is living in us.

# WITH THE IMMIGRANTS IN ROQUETAS DE MAR

*by Simon Apuri, a Ghanaian Missionary of Africa student. Simon is quarantined in Spain after 2 years pastoral work. He begins Theology studies later this year.*

I arrived in Spain in November 2018 for my pastoral experience. After learning Spanish in Madrid I joined my community in Roquetas de Mar in March 2019. At present, the community consists of Fr. Oscar from Mexico, Frs. Jose and Cesario from Spain and two stagiaires (those doing 2 years pastoral service), Jean from Rwanda and myself. Roquetas



## **Fully part of the local Church**

de Mar is on the southern coast of Spain, near Almeria. With a local population of ninety-five thousand people and an immigrant population of thirty thousand, there are one hundred and fourteen different nationalities. Of the immigrants, 35% are Romanian, 20% are Moroccan, 7% are Senegalese, 4% are Russian, 3% are Malian.

On arrival, I was introduced to the people in the “Centro Intercultural Afrika” run and owned by the community through which it serves the immigrants. Our apostolate is primarily contacting the immigrants and accompanying them as they try to integrate into Spanish society. With the help of volunteers, we teach Spanish, basic computer skills, driving theory and offer advice on how to process the papers to get resident permits. Our community also helps the local church in the evangelization of the African immigrants by teaching catechism to those who seek to be baptised and confirmed, as well as celebrating the sacrament of marriage and conducting funerals. Furthermore, we distribute food to those immigrants who do not as yet have papers and so have difficulty in accessing help from the government. Since we are missionaries, we also give talks in schools and parishes on the importance of the mission to us as Christians and what this should mean in our lives. I personally teach Spanish to two groups of immigrants for one hour four evenings a week



**Working in the greenhouses**

in the “Centro Intercultural Afrika”. We have 577 students enrolled there, but due to lack of space sadly we had to turn others away. I was touched and impressed by the effort they put into learning the language seeing that most of them work in the greenhouse farms from morning until evening. This

is physically very tiring, and yet they try their best to come for classes and stay alert to learn the language. The conditions inside the greenhouses are difficult for the workers. The temperature, humidity, irrigation, levels of light and shade are always carefully controlled to grow the strawberries, courgettes, red peppers, green peppers, tomatoes, melons, water melons, cucumber etc. you see in your local supermarket. On the lighter side, I enjoy visiting the immigrants in their homes. I am invited to attend naming ceremonies, baptismal parties and even some immigrants’ union meetings. In this way I have come to learn about some of the challenges that they face: lack of job opportunities for many, prostitution in order to get their daily bread for others, human and drug trafficking. I listen to their personal stories, about the perilous the journey from Africa to Europe. Myself I got to see how dangerous crossing the Mediterranean Sea is when I travelled from Almeria to Melilla, a Spanish town (enclave) in North Africa for a summer camp amongst the immigrants. My journey lasted six hours and I saw the violence of the waves. It felt cold on the high seas because of the wind even though I was travelling in a ferry and even though it was summer. What must it have been like in an overcrowded canoe? On arrival I was shocked to see a tall wall separating Mel-



**Miles and miles of greenhouses**



**The protective fence**

illa from the rest of Africa. The aim is prevent illegal immigrants from crossing and stop smuggling. First constructed in 1995, it consisted of two parallel walls of about three metres high. As immigrants still managed to cross this wall, in 2005 the

Spanish government built another six metre high wall with razor wire at some parts and barbed wire on top. This land border of Melilla is an approximately ten kilometres double-border fence divided into three sectors. Even so, many still manage to scramble over the fence-wall into the town, some getting injured in the process. There is a hill called Gurugu Hill on the Moroccan side, very close to the Melilla fence/wall. Most of the immigrants camp on this hill watching for an opportunity and whenever there are no, or few, guards at the fence, between a hundred and two hundred migrants rush all together to climb it and cross into Spanish territory. With these overwhelming numbers, when the guards arrive, they cannot arrest everybody. Those who are not arrested flee to a refugee Centre in Melilla where they are taken in. I met a young Burkinabe whose leg was broken as a result of scaling that wall. Fortunately for him and his friends, they were accepted into a Refugee Centre where they were treated for their injuries.

When I see and hear the difficulties they endure to get to Europe, I cannot but admire the courage born of hope and desperation of these migrants and am encouraged to share the love of Christ with them in whatever little ways I can.



**11 kilometres of fence**

# Being a missionary at home

by Fr. Augustin Sawadogo MAfr.



**Outside a Franco-Arab School**

*Fr Augustin is from Burkina Faso and has worked as a missionary in Sudan and Kenya. At present he is preparing his PhD at SOAS in London. As part of the fieldwork for this PhD he had to return for several months to Burkina Faso to interview teachers and administrators of Franco-Arab schools. These are schools which grew up under the French colonial system of the past and were meant for Muslim students wanting an authentically Muslim education. Fr Augustin is writing his thesis on the present state of these schools. Unfortunately his*

*visit coincided with a time of great tension in Burkina with Islamist violence and killings in different parts of the country. Not an obvious time for a Catholic priest to travel around inquiring into Muslim schools. Then as he finished his visit he was caught up in quarantine because of Coronavirus. He gives us here an insight into his experiences.*

Amid terrorist attacks and kidnappings, calls from family and friends to visit them, helping in parishes and finally Covid19, I had to conduct an academic research into Muslim schools in Burkina Faso, my native country, for seven months. Combining all these activities in this context



**Augustin in the mosque**



**The Mosque**

was a great test to my missionary vocation and to my patriotism, since I had to always be careful about revealing my full identity. I visited the first school after a very warm welcome and being encouraged at the Islamic edu-

education headquarters. So, I decided to visit another school in one of most terror-stricken regions, the North. To help prepare my travel, a fellow priest, a French national who worked there, offered to call the director of the area's radio station. Presuming that I was a white man and considering the high risks involved, the director requested and got a police escort for me. However, when I called him, he was surprised and said that being a native, I should just behave like the locals and travel by motorbike. So first I travelled by public bus, taking my motorbike which I used later to reach the school in a remote area 30 miles from where the bus stopped. I was well received in the school and immediately started interviews till lunch time. As I had just finished interviewing the last student and wondering about my lunch, a young man arrived with rice and chicken and cold water, a luxury considering the outside temperature was 40 degrees. He was sent by the school's Head who is the younger brother of the sheikh, a well-known Muslim authority in West Africa for organising the birthday celebration of the prophet of Islam (Maulid – a sort of Muslim Christmas). In the evening after completing my research I prepared to leave before dusk. Travelling at night is not always safe so the deputy head convinced me to spend the night at his house



**With the Headmaster**



and I was made very welcome. I have a picture with him at their mosque. However, in another school I was teased about being an orientalist (not a compliment) and a spy for the Catholic Church. Others present were more discreet and asked who sent me and sponsored this research and what was the purpose. In one of the schools belonging to a declared Salafi (a strict Traditionalist), I was first received with great suspicion but later introduced to teachers as a brother! Other challenges were celebrating Masses and conducting interviews in two of the local languages (Dioula and Moore) and in Arabic for the first time. In the case of Masses, most of the time, I had to either mix French and a local language or two local languages. This meant I had to rehearse thoroughly beforehand to make sure I got the natural flow of the words for both the Masses and the interviews. One Saturday, whilst visiting a priest friend in Zaba, Dédougou diocese, I had three Masses. An ordinary one in the morning, a funeral before noon and a marriage in the evening, all at different places within the parish. In the last mass I baptised the baby of one of the two couples.



**Mangoes**

managed to visit my family once. But now I am dividing my time in lockdown between analysing my data and making natural mango juice for my community. I am now following the example of the local birds enjoying the nice mangoes sitting in the shade outdoors and waiting for travel restrictions to be lifted.

After several months I concluded my research but the last participant had to pull out since the city I was staying in was put into lockdown. In the whole of the eight months back home, I only



**Pure Juice Pure Heaven**

## Tranquilising Development Through Religion

*Fr. James Ngahy, MAfr. PhD. is from Tanzania. After many years working both teaching and in parish work in Nigeria, he now works from the Centre for Social Concern in Lilongwe, Malawi.*



**Fr. James promoting the Gospel message**

It is very disheartening to see “religion” deadening and holding back social and economic development in our world. This is especially so in Africa, a continent of so many poor countries. I believe this is the opposite of the religion our Fathers in Faith, the Missionaries, brought to us. It is the opposite of God’s intention; the opposite of the Good News.

Christian denominations, especially some Pentecostal and African Independent churches, and those preaching ‘The Gospel of Prosperity’, are mushrooming everyday, from street to street, from village to village.



**Jesus died to bring Life**



**Word of God: Word of Life**

They often have bizarre names, seemingly the more outlandish, the better. Creating a ‘church’ seems to be easier than setting up an educational institution which would empower and develop people. Using God’s name to start a church has become an easy way to riches and pros-

perity for the pastors of those churches; meanwhile the majority of the faithful, their followers, are being manipulated and exploited and become poorer by day! Go to Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, you see the same thing. In Nigeria even some Islamic groups are following suit! These churches’ behaviour seems to justify what Karl Marx claimed: religion is the opium of the people. He claimed that, ‘Religion is the opium of the Masses and ... is used by oppressors to make people feel better about the distress they experience due to being poor and exploited’. In other words Religion makes you feel better when you are being exploited and is used by those exploiting you precisely to exploit you.

Yet the truth is Religion has a great role to play in Human Development.



**Building communities**



**Jesus born in a stable, at home everywhere**

It neither contradicts Human Development nor does it act like opium, replacing Human Development. Religion should be an encounter between a person and their Creator. Though it is concerned with the spiritual aspect of a human person, it recognises that a person is both spirit and matter. So, when missionaries (including Missionaries of Africa) were sent

to different parts of the world, including Africa, they did not stay up in the pulpit proclaiming the Good News in words only. They proclaimed and showed what the Good News is truly about, by constructing schools and promoting education, they improved people's health by building and sustaining hospitals, opening up new areas, even the most remote. Missionaries constructed roads and bridges in order to reach people, encouraging people to grow more varied food crops and introducing cash crops. Those missionaries embraced the Integrity of Creation as part of their mission. That is why mission compounds were living examples with fruit trees and spices. Mission compounds could easily be identified from afar, because fruits, orchards and vegetable gardens were part of their identity. In other words, development was part of the package of their mission, showing in practical ways the Social Teaching of the Church.

On the other hand, Fr. Richard Omolade calls "The Gospel of Prosperity" rather "The Poverty of the Prosper-



**Building together**



**Preparing for the future**

ity Gospel”. It is presented in sweet language, both seductive and appealing, promising believers that they will never suffer, they will only gain prosperity in every aspect of their lives. This is totally against the original meaning and understand-

ing of the Christian religion. In these churches preaching the “Gospel of Prosperity” there is a great concentration on ‘miracles’. People are urged to ‘give and it will be given to you’. Whatever you donate, God will multiply it and give it back to you. This is called ‘sowing the seed’. Paying for miracles is more important than work or education. Healings are more important than healthcare. Development is side-lined by Religion. Some pastors and preachers alter or misinterpret Scriptures for their own personal gain.

‘Simply pray, go to the prayer vigils and fast as much as possible. Give what you have and the rest will be rewarded to you. You can reap where you have not sown; you can get something for nothing as long



**Caring and healing**



**We are all Children of God**

opened unto you'. This is a dream of immediate relief and acts like a tranquiliser. But by implication, they are convincing people that 'God rewards laziness and poverty.' Instead of taking the sick to the hospital for proper medical attention or treatment, they speak of a spiritual attack. Sickness is a malign spirit attacking the person so the sick are taken to the pastor in order for him or her to cast out the devil or bad spirit. This is pulling the wool over the eyes of the congregation, fooling and manipulating them. Is it surprising that quite a number of these pastors and preachers today are so rich while their congregations, the people around them, remain poor. How can progress and development come in such a situation, especially in our poor African countries?

as you can offer what you have to your pastor and he or she will pray for you. The Devil will be defeated and the way to success will be unblocked; hence, success will be

Missionaries of Africa in particular, following the example of Jesus himself, did not try to tranquilise development through religion. They proclaimed the Gospel holistically in its authenticity. That is what we continue to do today preaching the Gospel positively, focusing on the Good News, which adds values to the real life of a human person - hard work, creativity, dedication, commitment, perseverance



**Each person doing what they can**



**Loved by God, we can step out unafraid**

and a sense of responsibility to the community. We encourage our people, those we serve, to clean and maintain their surroundings, to be creative and innovative instead of complaining or waiting for the government to do everything for them or get white collar-job employment.

The Global North, the highly developed part of the world – Europe and America – to where many of our people in Africa dream of migrating looking for greener pastures, did not reach the stage it is out of nothing, out of prayer vigils, miracles and the empty, manipulative, ‘prayer-grammar’ of their pastors. Their high standard of living and their strong economies which are competitive on a global scale did not occur out of religious superstition, or through shouting, ‘Alleluias’ and ‘Amens’! Citizens made a lot of sacrifices because of the love of their countries. Tranquilising development through religion is totally against God’s will. Jesus has given us the norm strictly internalised, integrated and followed by our fathers in faith, and found in the Social Teaching of the Church!



**The dignity of the Children of God**



# Abraham's Tent

## Living together in communion, our encounter with others

by Fr. Stephen Beru MAfr. from Ghana.

Dialogue with other religions can be viewed in various ways. A conversation where each has their own agenda, or one in which those with different ideas, beliefs and outlooks might listen and speak together. For our community in Marseilles it is relating creatively with the other. We consciously try to set aside fears, preconceptions, and tensions, then take time so as to hear other voices and possibilities. It means being open to new ideas and allowing collective wisdom to flower. In the midst of our differences and doubts, something authentic and original emerges. Our dream as



**The Catholic Community**

Missionaries of Africa has always been to get into a real encounter with Muslims. But the challenge is: how do I relate with them, with all stories I have heard about Muslims and the perception I had about them? On the other hand, will they accept me and will I be able to cope with their perceptions about Christians? But my various encounters here have given me another picture

of Muslims. I am beginning to realise that in these fleeting and complicated moments of doubts, the heart and mind point to possibilities. In Marseilles one key pastoral focus is 'Encounter with Muslims'. We are surrounded by people, the majority of whom are Muslims. Working together with an Italian Female Congregation, "Disciples of the Gospel", founded under the spiritual inspiration of Charles de Foucauld, and with various lay men and women, we are able to meet people at different levels. The White Fathers founded a social and religious centre in 1996 called simply "The Catholic Community". At that time it was mainly to provide Mass in a small chapel for Catholics living on the local housing estate. Fr. Etienne Renaud, MAfr. arrived in 2008. He had lived and worked Muslim in countries for many





**Celebration in the Tent of Abraham**

years and his arrival initiated an opening towards interreligious dialogue. After the death of Fr. Etienne, came Fr. Raphael Deillon, MAfr. who had the same zeal for outreach towards the Muslim

people surrounding us. He carried on the dialogue and together, with the sisters, opened a new social and religious Centre with a chapel attached to it. It was then that the name changed from “The Catholic community” to “Abraham’s Tent”, formally opened and blessed on May 19th 2018 by Bp. Jean-Marc Aveline, Archbishop of Marseilles. As a group, we have decided on an interactive form of dialogue. By being sincere and open, we approach our relationship with patience, and this often leads us to something entirely new.

We have sought to set aside fears and pre-conceptions and try to be creative in our relationships with others. We rely upon the sincerity of our individual voices speaking and the openness of our actions to colour our interactions as a whole. In practice,



**All welcome in under Abraham’s Tent**

we are engaged with children coming from Muslim backgrounds in our small Centre “Abraham’s Tent”. The aim is not to analyse things, or to win arguments, nor even to exchange opinions. What we do as a group is to allow ourselves to be motivated by our different talents, where each person is participating in the group with sincere openness and trust. We allow Christ to be the centre of our encounter as He says to us; ‘let the lit-

tle children come to me’, and through these young ones we are gradually getting to exchange with some parents and other adult Muslims. We meet with the children every Wednesday. We help them in their schoolwork; join with them in games; listen to them as they share what they do in school and with their friends and family. We encourage and help them to relate well with other children who do not share the same faith as them. These children have learned to share a lot among their playmates, starting with sweets and biscuits they bring from home. We have frequent visits from parents who sit and chat with us. They are happy with the peaceful interactions and play they see among the children. This is our way forward; this is what our common goal is. Encouraging these children to grow up showing love for one another. Our dream is to build a future where there is love in sharing, where there is kindness shown to others who are not like us. It is our dream to foster a spirit of togetherness among these children because in reality we are connected and need to live together with all aspects of our lives, be it our religions, cultures or ideologies. Through the encounter with the children, we have recently started with an active pastoral project for women. The Sisters accompany local women in vocational works, such as sewing. It is just getting started and many women are interested. There are



**How we live the Gospel here in Marseilles.**

positive signs of unity, of respect for the other and a passion for truth in the relationship. Our mission to encounter others could not find a better field than this melting pot in the northern part of Marseilles. The Gospel is not just words to be preached but first of all to be lived together on the “peripheries”, “at the edges” as Pope Francis calls parts of Society where people are

left aside, left out. *In the Bible, Abraham welcomed the 3 angels to his tent unconditionally. Abraham, the wanderer, the migrant, is seen as the spiritual father of the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims. In his tent all are welcome. Editor.*

## WE PREFER TO DIE OF COVID-19 THAN HUNGER

*Cyprian Chia is a Nigerian student of Theology at present in Ivory Coast. He has been called to take his Missionary Oath as a Missionary of Africa later this year.*

The coronavirus epidemic has the potential of causing catastrophic hunger especially in countries already suffering from food shortages, migration, unemployment, insecurity and economic recession. While so many African people are already suffering from precarious food supplies as a result of conflict and climate change, coronavirus has increased the danger to a great number of them. This coronavirus crisis combined with the general insecurity in Africa is exacerbating the threat of market stability on the continent. Thus, food has become very expensive and difficult to get. Aid organisations are unable to reach many places to supply the food and material needs of the displaced people in refugee camps. These and many other situations make the poor African people pant and cry out in solitude and hopelessness: we prefer to die of Covid-19 than

hunger.



**Getting water for handwashing is not easy**

Most African populations depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. And while the agricultural season especially in West Africa is fast approaching, the producers and the farmers are already severely affected by the lockdown which has led to an in-

crease in the cost of seeds and fertilizer. As for the pastoral communities like the Fulanis of Nigeria and Chad, the Touareg of Niger and Mali, they can no longer ensure the transportation of livestock from one country to another due to border closure and lockdown.

Added to that, today many people in Africa are displaced from their homes because of conflicts like Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Region, crises like the Tiv and Jukun in Nigeria, or the Touareg and the Fulanis



**Refugee camps all over Africa**

in Mali. These have forced many to live in refugee camps mixed with elderly, children, pregnant

and nursing mothers, and the disabled, many of whom are particularly vulnerable to this virus. With all this, how can they survive? Only their Creator knows. So Coronavirus has brought tremendous harm and economic recession to Africa's small-scale economies. Depending, as they do, on foreign aid and donations for their budget implementation and fiscal economic transformation in their countries, many African countries feel the pinch. Donors in Europe and America are also affected by this epidemic. Preoccupied with their own domestic problems they are not always able or willing to share as in the past. "Charity begins at home".

Even before this the African nations had not managed to deal with the major preexisting health challenges like HIV/AIDS, Malaria, Ebola and Yellow Fever. People here ask themselves: if Europe and America who have expertise cannot curtail this sickness, can Africa with less expertise and low budget survive?

Unfortunately this disease has also been politicised and turned into a money making venture for some politicians and business-



**Wars and bandits. The poor suffer**

men in Africa. It is a moment for flexing political and financial muscles by publishing their contributions in social media, national newspapers, and billboards to be acknowledged and to further their political campaigns. Billions are spent on these promotions yet people are dying of hunger. The fundamental questions are: where did they get this money?



**Locusts, floods, droughts, disease**

Why couldn't they use these monies to build well-equipped hospitals for the poor? Even when they do donate for the construction of hospitals is it out of compassion or from their selfish, self-centered and egoistic agendas? How many of these contributions even truly exist or are simply on paper?

Sadly, many of these contributions are just media propaganda, looking for political advancement. The reality is that the poor and vulnerable people of the society have not benefitted from so much money budgeted for the fight against coronavirus. People have been confined in their homes without electricity, not to speak of those living in camps and slums. The distribution of food announced by some mayors, for example, has been limited to political associates, thugs and syndicates. With these, can we survive this hunger virus? One frustrated lady insisted "if coronavirus cannot kill us, hunger will kill us" and millions of other of Africans are saying the same thing because most people survive from hand to mouth with their daily activities, but with the imposed lockdown by governments, it is impossible for them to survive. So, where will our help come from? Surely our help will come from us, ourselves.

Christians and Muslims, believers or non-believers, traditional worshippers, humanitarian agents and philanthropists, politicians or religious leaders. All must come together to save humanity especially in this African continent which is passing through such a difficult time of confinement

# A Visit to Vietnam

*(The second part of an article by Fr John Gould MAfr. concerning his visit to the family of a confrere in Vietnam)*



**Parking difficult during Mass**

These days people (in Vietnam) have no hesitation about expressing their faith openly and publicly. In parishes daily Mass is at 4.30 a.m. and large numbers attend. The first Mass on Sunday is also at 4.30 a.m. The churches are full for every Mass on Sundays; on feast days they are overflowing. The

size of the Catholic community in this region gives it a visible presence and an influence in society today. I visited thriving monasteries, and shrines and pilgrimage centres which are always busy. The Catholic Church has weathered the storm of repression and persecution under the communist regime which lasted around fifty years. But this not the only period of persecution the Catholics of Vietnam have had to endure. It is only the latest episode of a history of persecution that dates back to the arrival of the first missionaries in the early 17th century. At home we are very proud of the forty-two martyrs of England and Wales from the 17th century, and in our Society we are proud of the martyrs of Uganda from the 19th century. On the 3rd of June every year, the shrine at Namugongo in Uganda is the scene of a great pilgrimage and gathering of up to a million people in honour of the 22 martyrs who died in 1886 and others who were killed in the North of the country. Those who are named and honoured in shrines and in the calendar of saints represent the hundreds and thousands of unknown men, women and children who have struggled to live their faith and been willing to die for their faith over the centuries. The same is true of the martyrs of the Church in Asian countries like India, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam. But I suspect that most of us know little or nothing about their history.



**Tomb of an Emperor of Vietnam**

The Jesuits opened the first permanent mission in Vietnam in 1615 in the port of Da Nang in order to minister to Japanese Catholics who had fled to Vietnam to escape from

persecution in Japan. When the missionaries, Portuguese first, then the French and Spanish, began preaching to the Vietnamese, they were met with hostility from the rulers in the North and centre of the country and converts were persecuted. In the 17th and 18th centuries many Catholics fled to the South to escape, but in the 19th century there was also persecution in the South. The poor and oppressed welcomed the faith and were baptized in large numbers. But this alien religious teaching and practice was seen by the emperor as a threat to his authority and control. The practice of the faith was outlawed and savage repression followed. Near the cathedral in Ba Ria is a shrine to the 19th century martyrs. It is a small, unassuming chapel but it witnesses to persecution on a vast scale. The numbers are staggering. Some 30,000 catholic lay-people were killed in a period of twelve years between 1848 and 1860, along with 25 European missionaries, mainly French, and 300 Vietnamese priests. This persecution provided the French with the justification for invading Vietnam. In 1859, they captured Saigon.



**Young Buddhist monks**



Then in 1862, they attacked Ba Ria. As the French army moved in, the emperor and his troops fled, but before they did so they set fire to four prisons holding catholic families who had been rounded up from villages six months earlier, imprisoned and tortured. 288 men, 102 women and 54 children were burnt to death in one night. The French

**12 - 16% of Vietnamese are Buddhists** took control of the three southern provinces of the country, and a period of religious tolerance followed. A French missionary collected the names of as many of the victims as he could, and they are inscribed on a memorial stone in the chapel, which was built on the site of one of the prisons in 1865. The feast of the Martyrs of Vietnam is celebrated on 24th November. Last year it coincided with the feast of Christ the King on the last Sunday of the year. I concelebrated mass in Vietnamese with Vincent Tran and his parish priest in a packed church at 4.30 in the morning. I didn't understand a word, but the passion and conviction with which the priest spoke was obvious.

This history of faith and courage, demonstrated over centuries, is a significant source of the pride and the sense of identity of the Catholic community in Vietnam and it has stood them in good stead in the face of adversity in modern times. But ironically, if you look up the 'Ba Ria Martyrs Shrine' on the internet, you will probably be directed to a Government monument on a roundabout on the edge of the town – a typical grandiose piece of communist architecture, which is dedicated to the communist Viet Cong soldiers who fought and died in the area in the Vietnam War.



**7% of Vietnamese are Catholics**



## Covid-19 in Tafa Local Government Area, Nigeria

*Fr. Virgilius Kawama MAfr is originally from Zambia*

Here in Tafa Local Government Area in Northern Nigeria people are farmers and many took time to even accept that the pandemic exists, never mind how dangerous it is for humanity. This is because very few of them have access to TV, they cannot read, write or speak English. Eventually more awareness campaigns were made through radio and in collaboration with the local religious and community leaders. Even so, it was very difficult for people to understand the reason for the closure of interstate borders, shopping malls, cinemas, restaurants, airports, schools and offices, cancelling games and vacations, no big gatherings, and closing of the places of worship, and even where people were allowed to go, there were temperature checks and obligatory use of hand sanitizers. These measures, though good in themselves, posed various challenges to people who are used to leading lives as they pleased. Covid-19 changed the whole atmosphere in our social, economical and religious daily life, provoking anxiety and panic. People were worried as to how they would cope with a disease with no cure. Being a new virus, no one is sure of his or her immunity. Nobody anticipated such an infectious disease nor the deaths which seemed to go on and on. The situation in our markets, parks, institutions and social gatherings caused fear and anxiety. However, people were made to understand how we are to behave even so many things about the pandemic are beyond our control, how long it will last is uncertain, and how other peoples' behaviour cannot be predicted. God alone knows our communities' future.

Thank God some people are washing hands, covering their mouths etc. Both Church and Government are caring for Covid-19 affected families in different ways. They have shown true love and respect for the poor, the vulnerable and the sick by distributing food items to cushion their hardships following lockdown. The foodstuffs such as rice, grains, yam, vegetable oil, beans, semolina are being distributed. Our own parish is providing facemasks, buckets for hand washing water, sanitizers, temperature checking machines, and first aid boxes. These efforts are going a long way to helping people to cope with the Covid-19 situation. We are doing what we can and for the rest we are in the hands of God.



# WAYS TO HELP FUND OUR MISSION

## WHITE FATHERS

IF YOU WANT TO REMEMBER US IN YOUR WILL,  
We propose you use this formula:

“I give to the **Society of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)** the sum of ..... free of duty, and I declare that the receipt of the Father Treasurer of the Society in Great Britain, who now resides at 64, Little Ealing Lane, London, W5 4XF, shall be of good discharge.”

Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 233302  
Charity registered in Scotland No. SC037981

SUPPORT OUR APOSTOLATE:  
PLEASE USE THE DONATION FORM OVERLEAF

**Above all, please help us with your prayers**

Please complete the Gift Aid declaration overleaf and send it to:

Missionaries of Africa (The White Fathers), 15 Corfton Road, LONDON, W5 2HP.

or in Scotland to:

Missionaries of Africa (The White Fathers), 9 Milrig Road, Rutherglen, GLASGOW, G73 2NG.

Please notify the charity if you:

1. Want to cancel this declaration.
2. Change your name or home address.
3. No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

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The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) is a registered charity in  
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## Parents & Friends Association **EVENTS**

Nearly all of our Parents and Friends activities we have been forced to cancel.

In the community we are all well.

In line with Government regulations and carefully following the social distancing rules, wearing of masks etc, we are now open to visitors coming from outside to our community Mass.

Numbers are strictly limited, masks must be worn, hands sanitised etc, but at least it's a beginning of getting back to normal, and it's wonderful to see our faithful old regulars at Mass again.

# Your charitable prayers are requested

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



Peter Warren

Salisbury  
(brother-in-law of  
Fr. Daniel Sherry MAfr)

Mary Cowe

Bothwell

Alan Targett

Langley, Bucks.  
(brother of Fr. Mike Targett MAfr)

Anne Madden

Port Talbot

Paul Hughes

Felling, Tyne and Wear

**May they rest in peace**



## St. Anthony's Burse



By contributing to St. Anthony's Burse for the education of White Fathers, you will be helping to spread the Good News of the Gospel in Africa.

The Bursary Fund is open to donations of all kinds, large or small.

Donations should be addressed to:

THE WHITE FATHERS  
15 Corfton Road,  
LONDON W5 2HP

THE WHITE FATHERS  
9 Milrig Road,  
GLASGOW G73 2NG

Every letter or donation receives a personal acknowledgement.

Please make cheques and Postal Orders payable to:  
'The White Fathers.'

***You can now donate online. Have a look on our homepage  
<http://www.missionariesofafrica.org.uk>***

***Thank you for your generosity.***

***Special thanks to all our faithful supporters who regularly and unflin-  
gly donate by Standing Order, particularly those who are able to Gift Aid  
their donations.***

White Fathers in England & Wales:

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**Find out more about us at:**

[www.missionariesofafrica.org.uk](http://www.missionariesofafrica.org.uk)

**Gift aid form** available on our **website**

<http://www.missionariesofafrica.org.uk>

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In England & Wales, Registered Charity No. 233302  
Charity registered in Scotland No. SC037981

## I want the Charity to treat

[  ] The enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation; **OR**

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