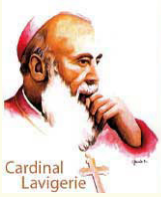


# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)

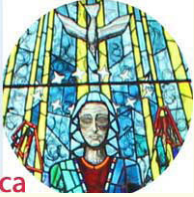


**November 2023**

**Month of the Holy Souls**



Mary  
Queen Of Africa  
Pray for Us.



Missionaries Of Africa

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*On the front is a photo of the graves of our confreres on the Mount of Olives*

# Editor's Word

Sometimes in Africa people are criticised because they don't spend the money to get medicine needed by their sick family members, yet they spend a fortune to celebrate their funerals once they are dead.



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

On the contrary, sometimes it seems that we in the West are very concerned about the health of our family members but we forget to pray for them once they are "gone".

In this month's issue of our magazine we see how the elderly and the "burnt out/distressed" are cared for, as is right, but we also need to remember in our prayers those who have died. They are still our family members. St Paul tells us that Faith and Hope may eventually cease, but Love remains. The love of our family and friends who are now in the heart of God, and the love that we have for them continues.

November, is the month of the Holy Souls. It is the month specially set aside to pray for all those we have known and loved who have completed their time on Earth and now await the Resurrection.

Every day, in each Missionary of Africa community, we pray for our deceased confreres, relatives and benefactors.

We invite you who wish to send in to us the names of deceased family and friends that you want us to pray for at Mass during this month.

It doesn't matter if your list arrives on the first of November or later in the month, as soon as we receive it, we will put it before the altar where Mass will be celebrated and we will remember them at daily Mass.

But what about those for whom we feel little love? It sometimes happens that someone dies with whom we have not reconciled, because of what we have done/said to them, or them to us. Praying for them can set our spirit at rest, laying down unfinished business. It is never too late to do good!

# Billère a White Fathers' retirement home in France.

by Fr Benoit Bernard MAfr



The house in Billère

On 18th July 1924 the house was opened in Billère, near Lourdes. Over the years the house has been enlarged and adapted as needs and Government prescriptions developed. At present there are over a hundred people living there in Lavigèrie House. Sisters, Diocesan priests, laypeople and 33 retired White Fathers (aged from 80 to 103). Another 6 White Fathers live in The Villa, a small house next to the



Fr Benoit in the centre in the Villa





On the lawn with friends and carers

main house, and another confrere residing nearby in town. A few of the residents live and are cared for in The Cantou, which is a part of the house specially adapted for the needs of those who are mentally fragile in one way or

another. They are looked after by very competent staff, there specially for them. The whole set up is run by an organisation, FEDES, which provides a total of between 80 and 90 carers and administrative



The beautiful Pyrenees in the distance



Organising the week

staff. It is clear that, given their age and state of health, very few of the confreres are able to take on demanding activities outside. However, some manage a pilgrimage to nearby Lourdes, or help out with occasional Masses and funerals in

nearby parishes, or hear confessions in local Catholic schools. Some even manage to go to listen to a conference or watch a film in town. Finally, there is a group from outside which meets in the house, Christians for the Abolition of Torture. Apart from these serious activities, we have a lady whose job it is to organise more light-hearted activities: card games, films, games to jog the memory, “gymnastics (very gentle!), yoga, cooking classes, dances (again very gentle), and outings for those who are able. Then, of course, there are the different “feasts” – Christmas, Easter, birthdays and anniversaries. Naturally, times change, needs change, the composition of the residential community changes, so every 3 months there is a meeting of the Social Committee composed of the Director, representatives of the residents and their families, representatives of the medical personnel and also of the workers and carers, to review life and conditions in the house. In addition, every Monday there is a small newsheet produced by the residents themselves giving the news for that week. According to their abilities and preferences, some residents look after the library or potter about in the garden, keeping it tidy and producing fruit and vegetables for the table. It is important that the residents do not feel isolated. Some receive guests, family and friends, and, when possible, go out with them for the day. Others share a cup of tea or a beer with their neighbours. How is this different from any other house for the elder-

ly? The fact that Missionary Life continues. The confreres continue to pray the Office and have Mass together every day in the chapel. They have formed a small liturgy group to organise these prayers and Mass and those less mobile join in from their rooms on internal TV. Every month one of the confreres from the house organises a Day of Rec-



Everyone brings their own talents to the get-together

ollection and once a year someone is invited from outside to preach the Annual Retreat. Outside these times, small groups come together to reflect on the Gospel or any other subject. Then, once a month all the White Fathers present get together to chat, eat and drink a beer together. We mentioned above that there are 80 or 90 people involved in the care of residents. This sounds like a lot, but they are necessary and invaluable. Doctors, nurses, those who clean the house and do the laundry, those who drive residents to hospital appointments, those who help residents in wheelchairs, those who visit the sick and finally those who are there for confreres approaching the end of their life here. We thank God for all of them.



# Do It Yourself in Uganda

by Fr Olivier Uwayezu MAfr



From time to time in this magazine we have heard from Fr Olivier, a Rwandan confrere living and working in Uganda. One of his priorities in the parish is to encourage participation by the younger people in parish work. That can be in prayer and liturgy but also in practical caring. He has encouraged a group of young Christians to get involved in







visiting the sick and elderly. They have been helped by various donors in their work and Fr Olivier has sent us some photos of what they are doing with the gifts from benefactors. They have begun making sandals for sale But with a sewing machine and a knitting machine donated from Germany they are branching out into making clothes.



Some of the local schools are very interested because it is not always easy for parents to afford school uniforms. The young people are able to produce simple clothing cheaply which helps the children and parents, but also brings in money for the coffers to help elderly and sick parishoners who are alone.



# Caring for the carers

by Fr Stéphane Joulain, M.Afr., Ph.D.

The African continent is a magnificent place, with its many peoples, rich and varied cultures and traditions, and many sources of pride and wonder. The Catholic Church in Africa is vibrant, and the faith and generosity of the men and women who make up God's people are exemplary. The energy of Africa's youth is a fountain of promise.



However, Africa is also a land of many challenges. The missionaries who work there are very often exposed to the extreme poverty of a large part of the population. Armed conflicts and wars that torment the local populations, as well as the voracious appetites of many of the world's nations, coupled with the corrupt ambitions of many leaders, can instil in the populations a fatalism that renders them powerless to escape the scourges that afflict them. What's more, major climate changes are

causing dramatic consequences for people who are already weakened. Missionaries witness all this on a daily basis.

These situations have a significant impact on the mental health of some people. Some develop anxiety disorders, suffer from depression, or turn to harmful compensatory methods such as excessive alcohol consumption. So sometimes we have find specialised centres to help them regain their health. Unfortunately, the African continent is poorly equipped





with structures of this kind, so they have to be set up.

In 2010, the General Chapter of the Missionaries of Africa decided that this issue had to be taken seriously. For a long time, we had relied on centres in North America, but today that presents many challenges, the biggest of which is the exorbitant cost of these structures.

So, our Missionary Society decided to see how we could create such a structure in Africa. We first had to identify a country that could host

such a facility, a country that was easily accessible and had a sufficiently efficient health system. We chose Kenya. The country has a number of advantages: it's easy to get to and obtain visas from, it has a good healthcare system and a large number of rehabilitation centres.

Once we'd found the place, we had to find a house and staff, and that took a little longer. Just as we were about to get started, the Covid pandemic put a stop to all that. But as divine Providence would have it, in 2022





Looking outside oneself to the work of God

we were finally able to officially open the Bethany Centre for Counselling and Spiritual Renewal.

Located in the Maasai Mountains, 50 km south-east of Nairobi, a team of four missionaries from Africa welcome priests and religious who need time to

restore their mental and spiritual health. The Bethany Centre is not a rehabilitation centre; it is a halfway house. However, we do work with rehabilitation centres, so we can welcome priests, missionaries and religious who have already begun a process of sobriety.

This small structure can accommodate up to 8 participants at a time for two three-month sessions a year. Each session includes personalised psychological



Local wildlife going about their business





Frs Stephane and Francois and Br Patrick

and spiritual support, shared psychoeducational activities, life review and faith enrichment. These programmes also include meditation practices and other tools needed to develop a healthy and fulfilled life.

During the rest of the year, the Centre is open for spiritual retreats or for people who need a break from professional burnout or compassion fatigue. The Centre is open to priests, religious men and women, missionaries on the African continent or working in Africa. Our young project needs the prayers and support of as many people as possible. It's a beautiful project, but it does have its challenges. The centre is far from everything, so we had to find water and a source of electricity. What's more, the access road is not very practicable, but that's the price we have to pay for a place with a peaceful and magnificent environment that allows each and every one of us to find him/herself again

The mission of the Bethany Centre is to help the people who come here to return to their mission with new energy, new tools to face the challenges of missionary life and ready to bear witness to the love of Christ for all mankind.

*Fr Stephane worked and lived in Lebanon and in Jerusalem and France before continuing his PhD studies in Clinical Psychology in Ottawa.*

# The Latest Confrere in the British Sector

As part of their formation and studies, any young man who wishes to become a Missionary of Africa must pass through certain stages.

They are in contact with the Society in their own country for a year or more, then start Philosophy studies (3-4 years). After this, they progress to Noviciate/Spiritual Year where they live, and deepen their prayer-life with would-be Missionaries from everywhere. Then come 2 years of pastoral practice. Living and working as a Missionary of Africa (al-



though without permanent commitment yet). Last Easter, St Vincent's Parish in Liverpool said good-bye to Silvesta Yobele Daison from Tanzania. After 2 years he has now begun Theological Studies in Kenya. Nicolas Nzirubusa from Burundi has come to replace him. Nicolas finished his Philosophy in Congo and his Noviciate in Burkina Faso, has now come to join Fr. Terry Madden, Fr. Charles Obanya and Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald in community for 2

Nicolas Nzirubusa. Born Burundi 1996. 2 years pastoral work, before going in his turn on to Theology.

**Welcome Nicolas! God bless your stay with us in UK!**

# Opening Youth to Believers of Other Religions

by Fr Augustin Sawadogo MAfr

At the end of September 2023, young people aged between 18 and 35 from across Europe, from all Church backgrounds met in Rome to share their religious experiences and journey together as the People of God.



Fr Augustin, Sr Iwona and Fr Vincent

This is my experience of a workshop and an ecumenical prayer organized for this purpose. At the request of the Taizé Community, I and other two missionaries organized a workshop at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI). Since its foundation in 1926 by

the Missionaries of Africa, PISAI has contributed to knowledge through scientific research, publications, academic activities, and teaching. So seated inside the impressive library of the institute, and surrounded by books of Arabic literature, seventy young people were there to discuss How can we relate to believers of Islam and what can we learn from these experiences? First, the young people attentively listened to our missionary and academic experiences. Sr. Iwona Cholewinska from Poland and a member of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters) emphasized that her experience in Mali and Tunisia taught her three things: the necessity to know the other person we want to meet; to find and build on what unites us rather than what divides us; and to work together with Muslims in different social activities. Fr. Vincent Somboro MAfr from Mali, now studying at PISAI, also shared his experience on tolerance and mutual respect. He dwelt first on his experience of being born and having been brought up by a Muslim mother



and a Catholic father. He also had a good experience working with young Muslims in Algeria and learning Arabic in Egypt. Finally, myself, Fr. Augustin Sawadogo from Burkina Faso and now teaching at PISA, I shared my experience. I had to learn Arabic in 2006, when I was a seminarian and the only Christian at the International University of Africa in Khartoum. Knowing Arabic was indispensable for daily pastoral activities and participation in liturgical celebrations at the parish. I learned that knowing my faith, being firm about it, and being respectful



of others were key to Christian-Muslim dialogue. For example, I had to take ablutions (ritual washing) before touching the Qur'an during lessons. Our sharing provoked many questions regarding religious freedom in Islam and how to proclaim Christ as the saviour in Muslim majority countries. Then we had group discussions on three important questions. What can we share with believers of other religions in daily life? What helps us overcome fears and prejudices? What resources can religions offer to those who work for peace? The young people were also inter-



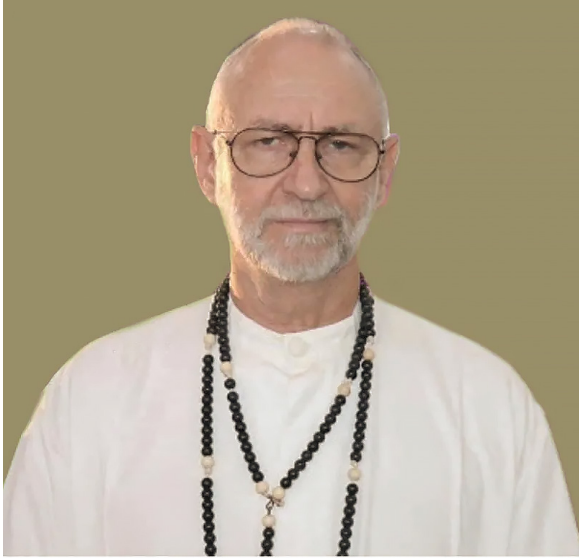
ested in knowing what Muslims in general think of Christians. In the end, the young people were able to see the importance of objective knowledge and mutual respect for a constructive dialogue with Muslims. I noticed on the faces of the young people amazement at being in a library of a Catholic institute where half of the books are in Arabic. They were very impressed, and proud, to discover that for nearly a hundred years, a Catholic institute has been committed to learning and teaching Islam through social encounters and academic studies. Then the ecumenical prayer took place at Saint Peter's Square in the presence of Pope Francis, representatives and youth of all the major churches. During the prayer, I personally felt there to be a peaceful silent communion among the participants. The young people also cheered the Pope



when he referred to them in his address. The most touching part was a play on the gospel passage of the Good Samaritan performed by both young and older people from all social backgrounds, with different abilities and physical challenges. I came away with the feeling that this was an experience which had touched me and I was the better for it.

## Kidnappings

We continue to pray for our confrere Fr Ha-Jo Lohre who was kidnapped in November 2022 in Mali. There has still been no news of him, neither good nor bad. We also pray for his family and friends and for



the Catholics of Mali. Finally we pray that Almighty God may touch the hearts of Ha-Jo's captors.

Kidnappings have become extremely common over the last 20 years in West Africa. Sometimes it is for a ransom, sometimes there is a religious motive, sometimes it is for sacrifices.

In August 2023 a Missionary of Africa parish in Northern Nigeria was attacked and whilst 2 confreres escaped, 2, Fr Paul Sanogo, 32, from Mali and Dominic Mahinini Merik (Melchior), 27, who had come from Tanzania for his 2 pastoral years, were kidnapped. Thanks be to God that within one week their captors released them.



## Institute of Islamo-Christian Formation. Mali.

My name is Fr Clement Tuureh,MAfr. I am from Ghana and was ordained priest in the Society of the Missionaries of Africa in 2011. In 2022 I was appointed to Bamako, Mali to teach Arabic, the Qur'an and Christian-Muslim Relations in our pastoral institute (IFIC) Institute of Islamo-Christian Formation. I also work as the Dean of Studies at the Institute and teach Islam at the Major Seminary in Bamako. Our institute is the brain-child of the Society of Missionaries of Africa and is part of the long history of the presence of the Missionaries of Afri-



ca among African Muslims in French-speaking West Africa and our encounter with them.

It was founded in 2007 in Bamako by Fr Josef Stamer MAfr from Germany, and it is through his hands that all candidates have passed for the last 17 years. Our mission is to train trainers in the field of Christian-Muslim dialogue. They are mainly committed French-speaking African Christians (Catholics and Protestants) who are already pastorally engaged in their communities.







The Institute offers a program that extends over a period of 8 months and focuses on giving an objective presentation of Islam with the lived realities of Muslims and encouragement of Christian and pastoral reflection on Islam, offering perspectives for Christian communities in a Muslim environment to live in peace.

### Guiding principles IFIC

Amadou Hampate Ba, a Fulani Muslim sage of Bandiagara in Mali said, “You would benefit enormously from knowing the various

forms of religion. Believe me, each of them, however strange it may

seem to you, contains something to strengthen your own faith ... Believing that one's faith or religion is the sole holder of the truth is an error. Indeed, faith is of a nature comparable to that of air. Like air, it is



Our students with their diplomas



Listening with traditional respect essential to human life and one cannot find a single man who does not truly and sincerely believe in anything ... So, as soon as a man believes in God, he is our brother. Treat him as such and do not be among those who are lost ... Certain truths only seem improbable to us, quite simply, because our knowledge does not reach them.” Pope Francis said in Abu Dhabi, “[We have] the strong conviction that the true teachings of religions invite us to remain anchored in the values of peace; to support the values of reciprocal knowledge, human fraternity and common co-existence [...] The Institute is located in the compound of the Catholic University of West Africa - Mali branch. Attached to IFIC is another centre for the Missionaries of Africa, the Centre for Faith and Encounter (CFR) which organizes conferences on different topics of common



Fr Pascal at a meeting organised by CFR





interest concerning Muslim-Christian relations. It organizes a public conference every two months, inviting two speakers, one a Muslim and the other a Christian, to speak 30 minutes on the topic of the day from the angle of his/her faith. Then the audience can ask questions or comment. Until Fr Ha-Jo Lohre's sudden disappearance on the 20th of November 2022, he was in charge of CFR. With Fr Ha-jo we were four running both IFIC and the "Centre for Faith and Encounter". Thus, Fr Ha-Jo Lohre from Germany, Fr Pascal Kapilimba, the Director of IFIC from DR Congo, Br Patient Nshombo, the Bursar from the DR Congo and myself, from Ghana. Now we are three. Fr Ha-Jo took his car out of the garage at about 7:00 am to go for Mass in the city but as he left the garage, he was kidnapped leaving his car abandoned. Since then we have had no news of him. We continue to pray for his release. What do we seek to do at IFIC? Mali is a predominantly Muslim country with about 92% of the population being Muslim. Here, it is not uncommon to find two Christians out of 15 Muslims in the same family. In some families, only the woman might be Christian while the man and the children





Fr Ha-Jo Lohre above with staff of IFIC and CFR are Muslims and vice versa. In addition to that, you find young Christian men marrying Muslims girls and a number of Christian girls getting

married to Muslims. There are also a few Muslims who become Christians and always, they face excommunication in their families because of their conversion to Christianity. This situation of a Christian minority and an overwhelmingly Muslim majority poses a lot of challenges. How can people live together peacefully in the same family and country with different religious affiliations? Only by listening to one another, only with dialogue. We believe that to enter into dialogue with somebody one must first understand the person's family and religious background. This is where our Institute, the Institute for Islamo-Christian Formation comes in. The Institute aims at becoming a hub for the formation of peace builders through dialogue not just in Mali but in the whole of Africa and even beyond. Since 2012 the sub-region has been experiencing armed conflicts that began in the northern part of Mali, provoked by Islamist and jihadist groups and pro-independence groups. Several armed forces have been present in Mali, Burkina and Niger fighting them. Faced with this crisis situation, our institute, in the name of the Church, strives to make its modest contribution by proposing the tool of dialogue for peace through the organisation of sessions and conferences in in the sub-region especially in Mali and Burkina Faso.

1. When I was first in Africa, a very poor woman offered me three eggs.

### Short Stories Collected by Fr Frank Nolan MAfr

I felt unable to take a gift of food from so poor a person so, unwisely, I refused them and suggested she had more need of them than I had. She went away and later I heard she was very angry. So she took her revenge. Taking the eggs home she put them under her hen. One hatched out and, after a few months, grew to be a fine fat bird. Then she brought it back to me and said, with a smile, Here is your chicken. This time I had the good grace to accept it.

2. My friend was on a long safari on an African bus. In his bag, he had two bottles of coca cola. After a time, he took one out and drank it. A little later, the woman sitting next to him took out the two bottles which she had brought, and in true African fashion, offered him one.



## Parents & Friends Association

A reunion is always a good time to share ideas and catch up on news of fellow members over the past year. That is what around 35 members of the Parents and Friends Association did recently at their annual day of thanksgiving and celebration on Sunday the 27th August 2023.







It was a two part event beginning with the celebration of the Eucharist in the chapel of the Missionaries of Africa at 9 Milrig Road, Glasgow. Fr Hugh Seenan, our current Sector Superior, was the main celebrant at the Mass assisted by Fr Donald Macleod who gave the homily. In his homily Fr Donald gave a list of the friends and missionaries who have visited us during the year. For the second part of the day we moved to a local hotel and restaurant where we enjoyed a meal together. A simple day such as this reminds us of the purpose of the Association to provide help and support for the Missionary of Africa priests and brothers, especially those who are currently serving the local Church in Africa. As well as essential prayer support the Association has and still does provide financial help for various missionary projects. It enables all members to be missionary and take their place in proclaiming and witnessing to the Word of God saying with Simon Peter in the Gospel of the day: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God".

Fr John Gerrard MAfr

Fr William Crombie asks us to remind everyone that there will be Bingo on Friday 10th November at 7.30pm. All other dates are yet to be finalised.

# Your charitable prayers are requested

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



Mr Maurice O'Donnell (W Lothian)  
Mr Jacques (Kirk Ella)  
Mrs Maureen Bailey (Essex)  
Mrs Mary G Duffy (Liverpool)  
Mrs V Ellison (S Croydon)  
Mr A D Lightfoot (Inverness)  
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Mr Brian Cunnigham (Keighley)  
Miss E Power (Bushey)  
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Mrs Mary R Harris (Cardiff)

**May they rest in peace**



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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.

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# Information

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### **Our bank details**

Account name: White Fathers Propaganda Account

Sort code 60-21-07

Account number:82296731