



2/2010

## EDITORIAL

**S**haring Experiences: This issue of our Africa Calling Newsletter gives you the opportunity to share experiences of Missionary of Africa aspirants.

Br. John Abobo from Ghana tells of his impressions of life in the Philippines during a six-months-long sabbatical at the Atheneo de Manila.

Our novice-to-be Clayb Caputolan reflects on his experience at the UST Hospital (Manila) and how visiting patients helped him discover a deeper appreciation of life.

Christopher Rabelas, now on his 3<sup>rd</sup> year in our community will offer you his insights obtained from sharing the life of a Filipino family during his pastoral exposure last summer in Tuburan.

Returning from Rome, Fr Bernard Monteron presents his experience of the General Chapter. A Chapter is always an important moment in the life of our Society as it sets the direction for the next six years.

It also elects a new Superior General and his Council. There are two articles concerning missionary vocation.

Fr Thomas presents the first M. Afr Aspirancy program to be set up in Cebu and we are happy to publish some news from the vocation club of St Tomas.

We take this occasion to invite other vocation clubs to add their contribution the next "Africa Calling" newsletter. E.L.

### Inside this issue:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Culture sharing               | 1 |
| Clinical Pastoral Education   | 3 |
| The Hospitality of a stranger | 4 |
| The General Chapter           | 5 |
| Aspirancy Program             | 6 |
| African sun shines for        | 7 |
| Pope's message                | 8 |

## Culture sharing

### Being African and living in Asia for 6 month, what struck you the most here in the Philippines?

John: "The way of being Church, worshipping, liturgy. Here Masses are limited in time. In Africa Masses are longer, sometimes you cannot tell when the Mass will finish. The congregation is more involved. They will dance as they bring the offertory. Here in the Philippines there is an emphasis on devotion.

People are very welcoming, smiling at me. One tends to attract a lot of attention being African and mostly positive attention. I was also struck by the fact that a lot of people could not tell where Ghana is in the world or even locate Africa.



**Do you think that the relationship between African countries and the Philippines can enrich one another?**

Yes, wherever there is a cultural diversity there is a potential for mutual enrichment. There are for instance the different ways of being Church. It is an area where the faith communities can share. There are also commonalities. There is an emphasis on family both in Africa and in the Philippines. As a missionary you are not only ambassador of your own country but of faith communities (i.e. our home Church) and of our families. This emphasis on the value of family is also relevant to formators and the formation process.

**You are going to Tanzania as a formator in our seminary. What will you say to the young M.Afr. in formation as you reflect on your stay in the Philippines?**

I would say that my stay at the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI) accorded me a very rich experience. different dimension of Churches are different Churches on the African continent. we can learn a lot from the different and ways of working in the pastoral management skills are employed than in any of the African countries I have been to. In the Philippines for instance pastoral agents are given charge of coordinating different ministries and so there is greater lay ministers' (and especially women) involvement. There is also a greater use of social communication materials such as PowerPoint projectors to facilitate the liturgy and music ministry.

*"As Africans we can learn a lot from the pastoral structures and ways of working in the Philippines."*

It also offered me a being Church. The Asian continent from the local continent. As Africans we can learn from the pastoral structures in the Philippines. More



## Back in Ghana. What will you say?

It was like 'home away from home'. After a short time, I felt at home and I made many friends. The programmes in the EAPI are good and surely worthwhile participating in. There is also a very good support system to aid any Missionaries of Africa confrere who would be interested in following the programmes.

## *Clinical Pastoral Education in Manila*

**H**ospital is a place dotted with doctors and nurses treating the sick, and much more than a place for injections, surgery and amputations.

A hospital is also a place where the drama of birth and death takes

place and can be clearly observed and

understood. Life is a gift that deserves all

the respect it should have and that **each**

**one is sacred and has an equal right**

**to live**, and to share and enjoy the goods

of the world with all other created things.

Last month, I finished my two-month pro-

gram on Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

It had its tough days but for me it proved

to be a worthwhile experience and I am

grateful for it. CPE helps and trains you to listen to yourself and then to others.

At times it can hurt a lot because there are many truths especially about oneself

that can be difficult to accept. In fact, one of the most painful and difficult truths

to embrace is to acknowledge that **the world is not for me to hold**; that ever-

everything is fast changing and that the time will come when I will have to bid

goodbye to the people I love, to the things I possess and to this whole earthly

life I wanted to believe was eternal. Death is inevitable.

It is amazing to witness birth but to be with the sick and the dying is totally dif-

ferent. Birth is anticipated and welcomed with thanksgiving, but for sure it would

be awkward to treat sickness and death in the same manner. Generally, death is

considered frightening because it takes away the life of what used to be a walk-

ing and thriving human being. It is a sort of undefeatable enemy before which

even the most powerful, intelligent and handsome cannot escape but will have

to kneel-down and bow.



No one can know when and how death or a sickness will strike. A person fully alive today may be cold dead tomorrow. Being with the sick brings its own temptation: namely hoping to be the ultimate savior who possesses supernatural powers that can heal and save from death. But this is a childish reaction far removed from the real and imperfect world. It was just horrifying to have to accept the fact that I too will end up lying peacefully in a closed-lid coffin. It was indeed a humbling experience.

**My patients taught me** to be more human. They taught me how to listen to my heart. They taught me how to feel by allowing me to feel their joy and their pain. I found a reason to be grateful for everything I have. It was beautiful to journey with them. I learned to be content in sharing what I had and in acknowledging that I also have limitations; that there are things in life over which I have no control and that I have to learn to let go. I was inspired by the children, men and women hoping and smiling amidst their intense pain. Some were hoping for a cure, some expressed their readiness to die and there were some who were (sadly) counting the days of lost opportunities to love, smile and live life to the fullest.

Definitely life is more rewarding and fulfilling when shared. Looking back at the times I was with my friends makes me smile. It is sweet (and wonderful) to know that I have a family and it is very consoling to love and to be loved. **Clayb**

## *The Hospitality of a stranger*

**R**ecently I was assigned to Tuburan, in the Northern part of Cebu for my parish exposure.

I've met different people with different characteristics, occupation, status in life, spiritual concerns and priorities. Basically most people in the area where I was assigned belong to the lower class

family including farmers and fishermen. I met particularly one family. I found out that they eat only twice a day. There were 8 in the family including the 2 kids ages two and four who are supposed to eat properly and to drink milk but in reality they ate only the cheapest of rice.



The first time I visited their place I expected to be treated as a stranger, which I was. But instead they welcomed me with such hospitality and a warm embrace as if I were their long lost friend. **They offered me all they had.** I then began to wonder if this is the reality of life beyond the Seminary walls. It is real life and that is not easy. You have to work hard in order to sustain your daily needs. For me the family I encountered really lives in fullness and has a richness of its own because of the hospitality they offered a stranger like me. I have indeed been fortunate and blessed to meet them. **Christopher**

## *General Chapter of The Missionaries of Africa in Rome*



**T**he General Chapter of the Missionaries of Africa began on 10 May 2010 in Rome. It was a gathering of confreres representing various provinces and sections of the society. In all we were 42 participants and together we planned and looked forward to where our mission would take us in the next six years. It was a beautiful experience for me personally even though at first I was anxious about the whole experience. We looked into

various aspects of our life together and we worked well in our different groups. One topic which was the most controversial of all was **OUR MISSION OUTSIDE AFRICA.** In the past, it was almost inconceivable to think of extending our work outside the African continent knowing that we lacked the personnel to do so. It was only because of necessity that new foundations and projects were opened elsewhere. In this chapter, there was the insistence on consolidating these projects outside Africa and giving confreres who are working there the support they need.

Our commitment to **JUSTICE AND PEACE AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION, ISLAM AND SPIRITUALITY AND MISSION** continued to be deepened and given priority in this chapter. There was the insistence again of making it part and parcel of each confreres' way of life and commitment. There was also the time given at the beginning to **FINANCES.** Provinces and sections were encouraged to find local sources of funds.

**FORMATION** on the other hand was also given great importance knowing that our future depends so much on having new confreres. We have been especially



blessed with vocations from Africa in the past few years. We hope to strengthen and boost our efforts in vocation animation everywhere. We also had moments of prayer and recollections to help us discern properly. These were moments of enlightenment and rest.

Another very important task that the participants were entrusted with was the election of the new General

Council. After serious discernment and prayer, the participants chose **FR. RICHARD BAAWOBR** (Ghana) as the new Superior General of the Society. He is also the first African to hold this post. He will be ably assisted by **FR. JOS VAN BOXEL** (Belgium) as First Assistant, **FR. SERGIO VILLASEÑOR** (Mexico), **FR. EMMANUEL NGONA** (Congo) and **FR. PETER WELSH** (Great Britain). The Chapter ended on

This year 2010, all over the world, there are 400 candidates in formation with the Missionaries of Africa. 22 of them have recently been ordained priests.



Fr Richard Baawobr offering a cross to Pope Benedict XVI

the 12 June 2010 with a very meaningful closing ceremony and mass. It was with great hope in our future that we parted ways. I came back full of joy and more confident than ever that the Philippine project will grow and bear fruit for our mission in Africa.

**Fr Bernard Monteron**

## *Missionaries of Africa Formation Community launches its Aspirancy Program*

**F**or those who desire to become Missionaries of Africa one day we organized for the **first time in Cebu a Come-and-See!** Program during the month of April. Our aim was to offer future aspirants an opportunity to discover the Missionaries of Africa through personal contact and community life while giving ourselves the chance to come to know each of these potential future candidates personally.

Having advertised the program among the participants of our monthly vocation club meetings in Davao, Sto Tomas and Cebu we were hopeful of having around seven to ten participants for our first-ever Come-and-See. It turned out that only three finally made it and were willing to commit themselves to participate in our month-long exposure to life in a Missionaries-of-Africa formation community.





To make possible a steady program and create a semblance of a timetable we were lucky to have invited Ate Fe Quijano as English teacher. We cannot overestimate the impact her presence made on the family-like atmosphere. We were also helped by Mme Cheryl Lao who facilitated sessions on human development.

A highlight of the month was a five-days family exposure in the still forest-covered watershed area in the high mountains of Cantipla/Cebu City. It was made possible through our link with the Rural Missionaries in the Philippines and the Task Force for Urban Conscientisation in cooperation with FARDEC. This latter is an NGO who was instrumental in offering legal support to our three host families in their struggle to assert their right to livelihood and land.

It was an unforgettable experience of **being evangelized by three families** whose values of hospitality, patient endurance and simplicity left their imprint on our hearts. We are looking forward to renewing the experience next year in April 2011. **Fr Thomas Schwiedessen**

## *African sun shines for the Tomasians*

**A**n overnight gathering of the Vocation Club of Sto. Tomas took place on July 31, 2010 at Aloha Inland Resort. Most of the members are students from Bukidnon State University, External Studies Center of Sto. Tomas, Davao Del Norte. The participants were led by Mark Lloyd Jaralba, a Business Administration student. Two new Bachelor of Arts students, Cocoy and Reymart, joined the group.



Despite the enjoyment and fun of the overnight stay, Fr. Bernard was able to put the group in a serious mood because of the film, "En route to 150 Years..." This film had a great impact on students who are planning to choose



Vocation Club with the Missionaries of Africa are present in **Cebu, Davao, Sto Tomas, Digos** (Mindanao). If you want to begin a vocation club in your place, contact us.

the priestly vocation in the future. The video is all about the 150th anniversary of the Missionaries of Africa and their work. Bro. Giovanni Robilla also shared with us the Powerpoint presentation that he made about his one month CPE (Clinical Pastoral Exposure) in Manila. The activity ended with a prayer and smiles from the participants

who are seeking for an answer to their individual calling. Another smile was also for a hearty meal. **Yuri Giovanni Colita** (Vocation club member)

## World Mission day Pope's message

In a multiethnic society that is experiencing increasingly disturbing forms of loneliness and indifference, Christians must learn to offer signs of hope and to become universal brethren... must strive to make the planet a home for all peoples...The people of our time ask believers not only to "speak" of Jesus, but to "**make Jesus seen**"... The missionary impulse has always been a sign of vitality for our Churches . **Benedict XVI** (Message for the world Mission Sunday 2010)

For information on **joining the Missionaries of Africa** contact:

Fr Bernard Monteron 0908 17 53 155

bamonteron@yahoo.com.ph

Fr Thomas Schwiedessen 0921 32 23 793



molafricavoc@yahoo.com

www.mafrome.org



## How you can help us:

-Above all, please help us with your prayers for vocations and for the Missionary in Africa.

-You can spread this « News Letter » through e-mail.

-You can help us in the formation of our seminarian by sending your contribution by check payable to « Missionaries of Africa ».

4 Kalaw St., Sto. Niño Village, Banilad,  
P.O. Box 1088, 6000 Cebu City, Philippines  
Tel N° (032) 344-06-06 Fax N° (032) 346-27-71

