



EDITORIAL

Christmas, is at hand! - The coming of the Lord into our world. The incarnation of God in Christ who wanted to become close by becoming one of us. He came as a fragile baby into a definite land, Palestine. He had to learn from his parents his culture, his religion, his language. When as missionaries, we are sent to a new country, we have to go through the same stages of learning: we are like babies who first have to learn so as to become close to those we are sent to. This issue of "Africa Calling" presents the experience of our missionary aspirants in their adoptive countries in Africa. Fr. Charlie shares his experience of India during his recent visit.

Our Saviour was born in a definite land. The recent collapse of the financial markets has made land an object of financial speculation and greed. Today we hear a lot about "Land grabbing". You will find some information in this Newsletter on the subject: how Africa but also the Philippines are affected by it. Finally we will begin a series of articles on the life of our founder: Charles Cardinal Lavignerie. To all readers we wish you a **Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year !**
E.L.

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Landing in Zambia

It was the 5th of September at around 4:30 in the afternoon when I arrived at the airport (Cebu). Time seemed to be rushing past while I was trying to hold onto each second of that day. I was with my family together with my Missionaries of Africa brothers. I found myself trying as best I could to remain calm and sometimes pretended to smile though my heart was heavy. I noticed that Geovannie, with whom I was travelling, seemed to be doing just fine. Because of the feeling of anxiety about hopping from

Cebu to Hong- Kong; then to Johannesburg and finally to Lusaka, Zambia and the reality that I have **to bid adieu to my family**, my stomach turned into a war zone and became as chaotic as my feelings. Unfortunately, no matter how I wanted to relax, it was just impossible because I was obliged to visit the lavatory from time to time. Looking back at that moment I feel amused at how things could go against what was expected. The same is true when I first set foot on the African soil. **I thought Africa was a whole safari** where vultures, elephants and lions roam freely everywhere and civilization, as defined by a



good number of people, does not exist. I felt ashamed of my own ignorance and prejudice when I came to the realization that the Africa portrayed by many books, television documentaries and even by narrative accounts of those who have experienced Africa, is so different from the Africa I have experienced myself. It's all a small part of the vastness

of what a real and personal experience could offer. Africa is not all a safari with nomadic people roaming around together with the hyenas. Africa is a continent like Asia or Europe composed of more than 50 countries with their own governments, languages and cultures.

I am in Zambia where the famous Victoria Falls is, but it does not mean that going there is like taking a ride from Talamban to Colon. I am in the town of Kasama 1,000 kms. North of the capital Lusaka and Victoria Falls is approximately another thousand kms south of Lusaka. Zambia is said to have one of the highest reported AIDS cases in Africa. Yes, many are dying of AIDS here, but many people are also living each day vibrant and full of life just like in every town or city back there in Cebu or in the Philippines. The town is teeming with a cornucopia of people and crime rate is very low that it is possible to walk with a gold crown without having to worry of being robbed. I am learning a lot of things about my new country: **my new home**. Amazing because the more I see the place and its people, the more I fall in love with it. Zambia has taken me as one of her own and I am grateful. Clayb Caputolan - October 30,2010



Justice and Peace in Malawi



I would like to share on Justice and Peace in Malawi where the Church has been present for 108 years. In the current situation of Malawian politics it seems the Church is silent in expressing the voice of the people. The church in general has compromised her role as the soul and the heart of the voiceless which should echo the real situation that people are encountering day after day: **Shortage** of gasoline, ongoing corruption in many forms such as in time or money, inexplicable poverty, problems of food security etc. Print and broadcast media are also silent in terms of expressing the real situation of what is going on in the country. While lay people continue to struggle and have become used to the situation that they don't even bother anymore to ask or complain. After all, they are already living in a very bad situation. Besides, people, for example, in Mua, or Chezi (150 Km from the capital Lilongwe) don't even know where to voice their complaints and to whom. Now the question is **what will be the role of the church?** Even though we have been running different programs like the center for social concern, prison apostolate, and hearing the different troubles that people are fighting everyday and helping them to restore their human dignity, still the Church of Malawi needs more spiritual fuel because the Church has a crucial role to play in the fight against any form of violence. But silence prevails! It is therefore *our challenge* to speak the truth firmly and at any cost. Ryan Contamina

After President Banda lost the first democratic presidential election in 1994 his successor, **Bakili Muluzi**, established a far more open form of government. Corruption, poverty and the high rate of HIV-Aids continued to hamper development and foster discontent with the new authorities. (BBC)

Indian Impressions

Last October, I was invited to give retreats to our students in India (Bangalore) in the First Cycle (postulancy) They were 17 of them and what a fine and generous group of young men they were! We went to **an Ashram** (Hindu retreat centre). As so often happens in the directed retreat, one is witness to the always surprising grace of God at work in people's hearts. Truly you are on holy ground. It is always a privileged experience.



The Ashram itself is built on a hill overlooking a national park. It's usually very quiet and peaceful except when the villagers light the crackers to scare off the elephants. Scattered throughout the grounds are the brown termite hills. The Chapel is built as if it were itself **a giant termite hill**. It's pinnacles reach to heaven like a primeval Gothic Cathedral. Inside, the stained-glass windows have Hindu and Christian themes. Everyone sits for the Eucharist. I couldn't manage the lotus position so they gave me a chair. As celebrant I wore a shawl instead of a chasuble. An Indian Sister then began a haunting Carnatic Hymn in the style of South India and our students joined in. The symbol of peace - so unlike the gentle nod - is the deep and dignified praying-hands bow.



The big difference between our First Cycle in Cebu and that in Bangalore is that in the former we need students but in the latter the great need is for staff. The authorities in India are making it more and more difficult to get visas. Our young Indian confreres have been very generous in giving their time and energy to the project. Our non-Indian confreres are so courageous in accepting such a task with its many frustrations and visa complications. I couldn't but admire their tenacity and dedication.

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Vocation ministry through music from Ghana?

A *wawa odo be ni!* Is an African song about friendship with Jesus that marks the beginning of my vocation journey. I learned it from a group of Ghanaian immigrants in Germany. "**A wawa odo be ni!**" "What a wonderful love!" Little did I know that my encounter with Ghanaian neighbors would be a seed of my missionary vocation that eventually landed me in Ghana for 13 years! Since my arrival in the Philippines this song has accompanied me on my



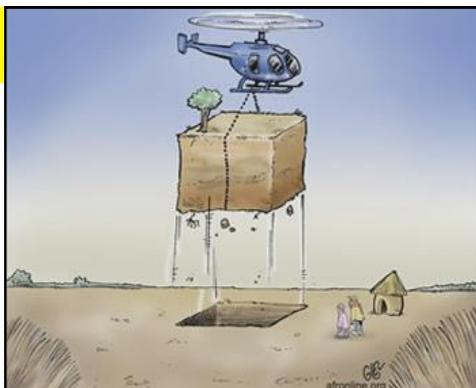
visits to schools during vocation campaigns. Whenever I introduce it to a class of Filipino students it never fails to meet with an enthusiastic response. If there is enough time it can be danced as well. If you are interested in the sound track please email: molafricavoc@yahoo.com and I will send you a home recorded MP3 version as file attachment. Fr. Thomas Schwiedessen (vocation promoter)

A wawa odo be ni

A wa-wa odo be ni A wa-wa odo be ni A wa-wa odo be ni o-do be ni.
 Mi ni Yesua ti-na, Mi ni nua na nti, Ma fa Ye-su se
 Ma da-mfo paa A wa-wa odo be ni o-do be ni!

Land Grabbing

According to a World Bank study, "from 1990-2005, the land cultivated expanded by 5.50 million ha per year in developing countries. (A little larger than Cebu island with 5.08 million ha). Cropland expansion was concentrated in sub-saharan Africa, Latin American and Southeast Asia. Key commodities driving it were vegetable oils, sugarcane, rice, maize, and plantation forests. A conservative estimate is that, in developing countries, 6 million ha of additional land will be brought into production each year up to 2030. Two thirds of this expansion will be in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America."



Who demands land? Three broad groups: Governments from countries who are concerned about their inability to provide food from domestic resources (China, South Korea, Japan and the Emirates). Financial entities (like pension funds); Traditional agricultural or agro-industrial operators or traders.

Who sells the land? In Africa, Ethiopia (3.2 million hectares during the last 5 years) Sudan and Mozambique are the countries who sell the most followed by Tanzania, Ghana, Namibia and Cameroon. In Asia the 3 biggest sellers are



Indonesia, Philippines and Australia.

"Any investments need to help countries achieve their development objectives rather than the needs of investors. For many countries improving the productivity of smallholder farmers will have a much larger impact on poverty reduction than promotion of large-scale land acquisition, and that if a country decides that attracting investors is in their best interest, ways that such investments benefit local populations must be high up on the agenda." For these reasons in 2009, **seven principals** have been proposed by the World Bank:

- 1: Respecting land and resource rights
- 2: Ensuring food security
- 3: Ensuring transparency, good governance, and a proper enabling environment.
- 4: Consultation and participation.
- 5: Responsible agro-investing.
- 6: Social sustainability.
- 7: Environmental sustainability.

There are one billion hungry people worldwide. 75% of the world's poor are rural, and most are engaged in farming. The need for better investment in agriculture to reduce poverty and promote environmental sustainability is a major priority today. Sources: *Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits?* (World Bank, September 2010)

In the Philippines:

A \$300-million banana export project in Davao del Norte has been finalized between NEH of Bahrain and the AMA Group. "The government has already identified 10,000 hectares in Davao del Norte of which around 2,000 hectares were already consolidated. Production of the banana facility will partly address the demand for Cavendish bananas in Bahrain and in other Gulf countries.

During a trade mission to Bahrain in 2009, the Gulf country committed itself to investing in crop technology, vegetable and fruit preservation and biotechnology. GMANews.TV 09/09/2010

An Extraordinary Encounter

Fr. Bernard Monteron, a Missionary of Africa from Cebu City had invited us to join **the vocation "Search-in"** on September 25-29, 2010 at the MIC Retreat House at Davao City. The invitation filled us with an amalgam of emotions: excitement, curiosity and anxiety. On arrival we received a warm welcome complemented with sweet smiles from Fr. Bernard and Kuya Frank, his companion, assistant and Sr. Azun, Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (MIC). Other participants had come from Santo Tomas Davao del Norte. We were soon acquainted with one another. We were 16 altogether. The schedule of activities was made known to us and different tasks were



assigned to inculcate a sense of responsibility and make all of us feel involved in the program.

In the course of the program Fr. Bernard became for us a beloved friend and brother, even a true father,



concerned to share significant messages and a sense of enlightenment. His talk of struggles and accomplishments as a member of the Missionaries of Africa greatly inspired us. It made us realize that we need to treasure what we have and be thankful to God so as to share with others in need. **No one is excused from sharing with others** since even the poorest person on earth who might own nothing can still give "himself".

Our previous perception of a vocation search-in understood as an entrance to priesthood or brotherhood was abolished when Fr. Bernard told us that "vocation search-in" is meant for discernment of what is really one's vocation aided by the grace of God." Joining a vocation search-in does not mean you are expected to become a priest. It's primarily **a help to discern** what your vocation in life really is: married life, religious life or a life of single blessedness devoted to God. He added that discerning takes time. True vocation cannot be known instantly.

The last night of our search-in was our solidarity night. It turned out to be a breathtaking laughing show beyond all expectations. It more than attained our objective of strengthening our bonds making us feel like true brothers. Surely we will meet again as we promised each other.

Prepared by: Claudio Cartin Jr.

Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie

Born in Bayonne in South of France in 1825, our founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (1825-1892) lived during a time of enormous changes in the aftermath of the French Revolution (1789). He was a contemporary of St John-Maria Vianney, the Curè of Ars (1786-1859) and of Karl Marx (1818-1883). He was 35 years older than J. Rizal (1861-1896) and 38 years older than A. Bonifacio (1863-1897). He was 33 years old when our Lady appeared to Bernadette at Lourdes.





He was the first-born of a family of 3 boys and one girl. His mother was devoted to her children and learned Latin and Greek in order to follow them in their studies. But it was the servants who would teach them their prayers. Charles used to "play mass" at home at an early age, requesting at times the presence of the servants.

At the age of 15, to the great surprise of his father, he asked to go to the seminary. As there were no tuition

fees to be paid his father accepted. When later it was found out that he did not belong to the diocese where the seminary was located he had to pay fees. His father refused to let him go. By chance Charles was noticed as a clever student and sponsored to continue the seminary in Paris (800 km away from his family). His parents in the meantime were scheming and hoping to make him fall in love with a young girl. This never happened. During a visit of a missionary from Manchuria who talked to the seminarians about his hopes and difficulties for the first time the desire for missionary life was kindled in Charles...

New Archbishop in Cebu

Benedict XVI named Archbishop **José Serofia Palma** of Palo, Philippines, to lead the Archdiocese of Cebu. He will succeed **Cardinal Ricardo Vidal**, 79. We remember that in 1991 Cardinal Vidal welcomed the Missionaries of Africa. The archdiocese has 3.6 million Catholics out of a total population of 4 million. There are 365 diocesan priests, 382 religious men, around 1,100 religious women.

For information on **joining**

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How you can help us:

- Above all, please help us with your prayers for vocations and for missionaries in Africa.
- You can spread this « News Letter » through e-mail.
- You can help us in the formation of our seminarians by sending your contribution by check payable to « Missionaries of Africa ».

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