



1/2012

EDITORIAL

Have you ever dared to imagine what your life could be like if you followed your dream? You may still remember the dreams you had as a child. Often these dreams were inspired by great generosity and hope.

Sometimes our childhood dreams can be seeds planted in our hearts by God. These seeds express our deepest aspirations. They can inspire us and become a source of meaning and direction for our lives. As long as we remain unaware of the value of this seed we may neglect to nurture its growth. Our dream may fade and the seed seems like it is buried under tarmac or concrete!

Yet it remains alive with a potential to shape our future. At times it might take years to make itself noticed again. Suddenly it may break through the hard surface of our fears or daily routine and affirm it is alive!

In this newsletter young Filipino Missionaries of Africa will share their vocation journey. The youngest among them is Jame de la Cerna from Mindanao, to be ordained priest on June 9, 2012 in his home town Sigaboy (Davao Oriental). We hope that these stories may inspire and rekindle your own dreams!

May this season of Lent become a favorable time to care for the seeds planted by God in our hearts. May we dare to dream big that people in Africa may find "life in abundance". (Jn10:10) **E.L.**

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Priestly Ordination of
Rev. Jame Dela Cerna M.Afr.

By Most. Rev. Bishop Patricio Alo
 June 9, 2012 at 9:00 am
 Thanksgiving Mass June 10 at 8:00 am
 Sigaboy (Davao Oriental)

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With Malawians in time of Crisis

Malawi, the warm heart of Africa: a country of rolling hills, majestic mountains and flowing rivers. It is famous for Lake Malawi that covers 20% of its total area. Malawi means flame referring to the place along the lakeshore. The economy is highly dependent on exporting cotton, tobacco, tea, coffee and uranium.



People cultivate corn as staple food. Farmers' livelihood depends on seasonal rains lasting only four months.

Malawians are known for their hospitality, humility, cheerfulness and resilience. For many years Malawi topped the list among Africa's most peaceful countries. However, recently the country has started to experience "**crisis**".



Just before I arrived (July 2011) several shops were looted, cars smashed and burned, people shot dead. The streets were full of angry people. Instead of aiming to present a solution the President started pointing fingers at the Catholic Church and the NGO's.



Fuel was one of the first things to be affected. People with practically empty tanks have to wait and queue for days just to get a few litres of fuel. Normally a litre of petrol/gasoline is about \$2.5. In the black market a litre is sold at nearly \$5.5. Coca-Cola, at one point, had to stop producing soft-drinks because it failed to get enough US dollars to import the raw materials (even the bottle caps). Our small clinic for HIV- Aids patients is also affected. A shop at one time asked us to pay in US dollars to get milk imported. We have the same problem with medicines.



At the time I am writing this article petrol is available again in most filling stations. The government has imposed a ban on the filling of Gerry cans. Many houses were burned and people killed because of mishandling fuel-filled Gerry cans.

The common Malawian saying goes ***Titani nanga ! Choncho!*** What can we do! It is (always) like this!" I believe in the capacity of Malawians to succeed and to progress. It is my greatest desire that Malawians themselves will take courage to say "We can do it! It should be like this!" (Clayb Caputolan)



Leave your country and go to the country I will show you!

Ever since I was a child, I had felt that deep desire within me to help the poor and the needy. My parents' example was a good influence on me. One day I saw my mother giving food to a poor man at the kitchen. Before he left my mother handed him a bag of used clothing. I ran to my room, got some shirts which I was not using any more and said to my mother to give them to the man.



It was through the FSPIF sisters (Franciscan Sisters Pro Infante et Familia) of Cebu that I heard about the Missionaries of Africa. Knowing them enkindled my desire to help people beyond my own country. I had not heard much about Africa then except for famine and hunger. I'd read a pocket book about the snow of Kilimanjaro though.

"Leave your country and your kindred and your father's house and go to the land that I will show you." (Gn 12:1) This had been echoing in me so strongly when I was at the height of my career as a product specialist of a pharmaceutical firm. I was in Hong Kong then enjoying my role as "quota buster and product specialist of the year 1995" when I felt the call so strongly. I tendered my resignation upon my return in Cebu and joined the Missionaries of Africa.

After my ordination I was sent to Burundi. Working with a team of dynamic Burundians and having done everything I could to save and improve the quality of lives of thousands of people living with HIV and AIDS as well as helping the orphans in Burundi was my greatest joy as missionary in Africa. (Fr. Armand Galay)



Gifts from Africa

This is how I first met the Missionaries of Africa: one day Fr. Michael from Malawi, vocation promoter entered the chapel of UC greeting us "Maayong hapon sa tanan! Ako si Fr. Michael Mawelera, **White Father!** The whole place burst into laughter ... an irony ... wasn't it? (How can a black man call himself "White Father"?) But then he explained further, in perfect Cebuano, why "White Father" (the Missionaries of Africa were nicknamed "White Fathers" because of their white Gandoura, the dress of the Arab population whose lives they had come to share). So there was the beginning of my journey, to find out and know more about the Missionaries of Africa and AFRICA as a continent.



After two years of formation in our community in Cebu I was appointed to Burkina-Faso (West Africa) for my novitiate. It became a turning point in my life. Obligated to speak a new language, stepping into a new place, inserting myself into a new culture, hearing different African languages as well as **being fearful** about malaria and other sicknesses put me into a state of shock. Not only that! After I succumbed to severe malaria and hepatitis my novitiate was put on halt. My mental frame fell apart. I became depressed. It was hell!

But God's grace worked in that particular moment... within a few seconds persons whom I knew closely flashed into my mind. The last image was that of **the Cross!** So there and then I picked up the pieces of my life and slowly put them back into the place.

Thanks to those who with listening hearts became instruments of my fast recovery while I stayed in Burkina-Faso. This particular experience became an opening for me to be more attuned to Africa. Ironical, but that is how it was!

While continuing further stages of formation in Africa like the novitiate in Zambia, pastoral work in Tanzania and Theology in Nairobi/Kenya, I discovered a language that transcends the spoken one, **the language of love.** This language extends beyond races, colors, religions and gender. I learned that people whom I met from these countries have feelings, intelligence, faith and most importantly, the color of their blood is the same as mine.



Now back in Tanzania for my first appointment and involved in youth ministry it makes me realize that learning a new language is an ongoing process. Living with my community, a mixture of Missionaries of Africa and Diocesan priests with the Archbishop of Tabora, working with the youth and dealing with other people coming from the different walks of life has helped me

see how God's love is at work in my life through them. These experiences are gifts and a call to deepen my faith and to continue trusting the Master Planner. (Br. Lito Doguiles)

My Vocation Journey

I was born on September 11, 1975 at Tagumlom, La Union San Isidro, Davao Oriental from Flaviano and Aida. I am the 6th born of 8 children, 4 boys and 4 girls. My Father is a farmer and fisherman. He never went to school, he neither read nor writes. My mother did not complete Primary school. At the age of 7 I got attracted to becoming a priest when diocesan seminarians visited our small Christian community (GKK) chapel during the month of May (Flores de Mayo). Most of them wore white Soutana. This first encounter made me to pray to God: **"Lord, I want to be like them."** I did not know then what it would entail and what lay ahead.



At 14 I graduated from elementary school. My parents had all of us educated. They never gave up and they encouraged us to continue our education because they **didn't want us to be like them**. I am so proud of my parents for this!

During my High School I served as a convent boy and sacristan under the care of Rev. Fr. Ben Versosa DCD. The simple lifestyle and the fatherly care I enjoyed during those four years gave me great joy and made me dream of becoming a priest myself. Right after the graduation in 1993 we were recruited to join the diocesan seminary. Twelve of us qualified for the entrance examination but no one was able to pass! I decided to study education and in August 2002 I successfully took the board exam.

An encounter with a seminarian Renato connected me with the PME missionaries and the late Fr. La Fortune PME (Fr. Renato now, first Filipino PME Fathers).

I stayed with them from October 2001 till May 2002 in Little Baguio (Malita/Davao Del Sur). It was for me "a time of discernment before deciding to join them". My stay in Little Baguio with the Taga Kaolo and Bl'an Tribe became a defining experience for me. It was **there that I discovered my missionary vocation.**

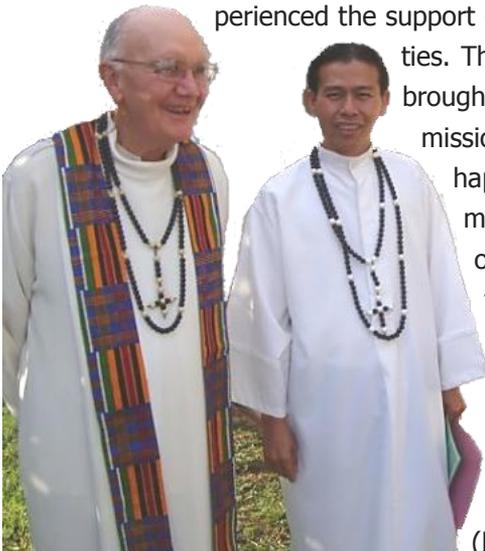
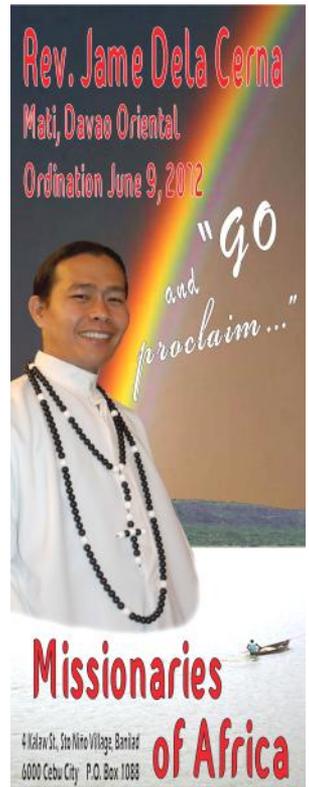
In 2002 I left for Cebu to study at San Carlos University as a PME seminarian while staying with the Missionaries of Africa. Their monthly gathering "AFRICA CALLING" created in me a first awareness about African countries: their social issues, life and cultures, panoramas and beauty of people. After three years of philosophical studies, prayer and reflection I decided to pursue my vocation with the Missionaries of Africa.

Today after already more than six years on African soil I realize that **there is more than misery** in Africa. I have learned to appreciate African cultures, beliefs, traditions, languages and values. I have discovered Africa's beauty in its landscapes, panoramas and wild life, often amazing beyond comparison. On the other

hand I have also experienced fear. Fear of being far from home and family, fear of getting sick while away (malaria and other diseases). Mind you, Missionaries of Africa have been very supportive all along like **a second family!** I also experienced the support of African families and Filipino communities.

These wonderful African experiences have brought me joy, contentment and peace in my missionary vocation. In a few months I will be happy to go back to Davao/Philippines for my priestly ordination. It will be the climax of my journey so far and yet a beginning to being a true missionary of Africa, a man of faith and love, a man of prayer and a man of action for God's glory. May God be my strength, my source of love, my only wealth! May He keep me always faithful to his call!

(Rev. Jame Dela Cerna)



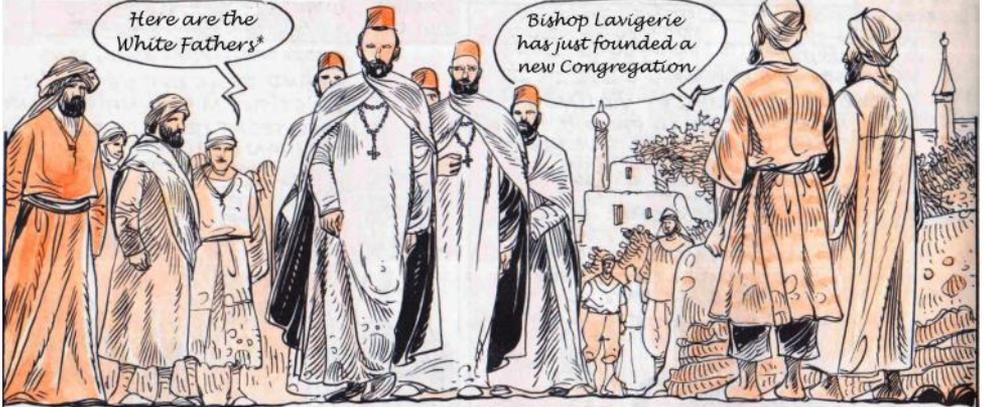
Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie (6) A Missionary Society is born

After a first emergency intervention in response to drought, crop failure and widespread hunger Lavigerie was confronted with further challenges: *Who will care for and educate hundreds of orphans for the next 10 years?* Another concern was in his mind: Living among a Muslim majority he needed priests able to speak Arabic who would understand both the Qur'an and the local culture. Often he would share this concern with Fr. Girard (then superior of the diocesan seminary).

One evening in December 1867 Fr. Girard addressed the seminarians in these words: *"Gentlemen, who knows ... that here in this very room there may be two or three young men who will offer to devote their **lives to the African mission?**"* During the recreation that same evening three seminarians exchanged their thoughts:

- "What did you think of the address?," began the first.
- "I would like to be one of the three volunteers for missionary work!".
- "So too would I", agreed the third.

February 2, 1869 for the first time the Missionaries receive their habit...



*The name *White Father* comes from the color of the Arab vestment they wear.

All three had been inspired by the same thought: **Mission!**

Aware of their enthusiasm the eldest among them suggested: "We must not be too hasty. Let us pray a novena! If we still feel the same at the end, we will approach Father!"

When the nine days had passed with their enthusiasm unchanged they decided to express their desire to Fr. Girard. He was joyfully surprised and astonished by

their request. After a few more days of prayerful reflection they all together sought audience with Archbishop Lavigerie.

"I am unable to tell you how happy you have made me!" exclaimed the overjoyed Lavigerie, "but now I will ask you to think it over carefully because the life of a missionary is one of complete sacrifice." Then he blessed them with the words "**Make disciples of all nations!**"

Come and See!



**1 month experience with
The Missionaries of Africa**
Cebu **April 9 - May 5, 2012**
College students and young professionals.
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How you can help us:

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