



# AFRICA CALLING

Newsletter of the Missionaries  
of Africa in the Philippines

2/2012



**JOY** continues to resonate in us after the Ordination at Sigaboy of Fr. Jame Dela Cerna who is assigned to Uganda (Africa). Joy and gratitude for the 17 Missionaries of Africa who like Jame will be ordained priests in their home dioceses and a missionary brother who took his solemn perpetual oath.

The semesteral break is always a good occasion for new experiences. In this issue our seminarians share their immersion experience among the indigenous people of Davao del Sur.

The Missionaries of Africa Lay Associates tell of their "Flores de Mayo" catechism for children in our neighborhood.

Our community is thankful to Fr. Thomas Schwiedessen for his dedication to the project of the Missionaries of Africa in Cebu for the last 7 years. He has started his Sabbatical joining the San Jose Seminary community in Manila as a priest-student together with diocesan theology seminarians from all over the Philippines . We are glad to welcome two new members into our community: Fr. John Itaru from Tanzania who has come to study for an MBA (see article p.4) and Fr. Luisito "Loloy" Poe from Davao who was in Zambia for the past 8 years. He will work together with Fr. Bernard as a vocation promoter. May their vocation ministry be blessed and be a source of blessing for many!

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A simple way to contribute to the work of the mission:

**Mass offering and Mass intention  
can be addressed to the  
The Missionaries of Africa**

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## Suroy - Suroy sa Sigaboy: Ordination of Fr. Jame Dela Cerna

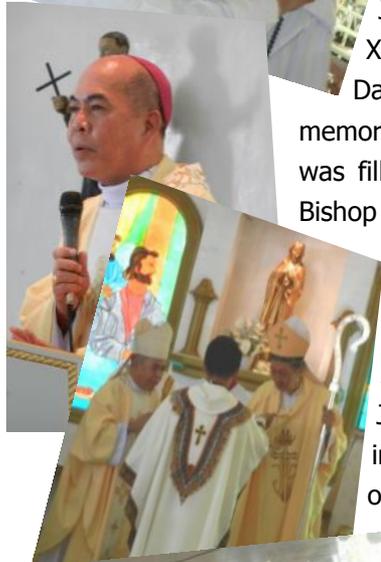
**A**ny good occasion is remembered through actions that touch and challenge one's being.

These can be events, conversations, acquaintances, etc. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June 2012, Fr. Jurey Jame Dela Cerna was ordained at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Governor Generoso (Sigaboy), Davao Oriental. Such an occasion brings to life memories of our own commitment to life. The church was filled with the faithful who joined the celebration. Bishop Patricio Alo, D.D., Bishop of Mati was the main celebrant. He was joined by Archbishop Romulo Valles of Davao who gave a very challenging homily.

Archbishop Valles in his homily reminded Rev. Jurey Jame about three things that will help him in his life as a priest. First the **joy** of the gift of ordination is inevitable and will have to be shared with everybody. Praise God!!! Secondly, Archbishop Valles reiterated the importance of **detachment** and its primacy to the life that the reverend had chosen. Service will only be true when one is detached from other commitments in life. Be like Abraham

in the Old Testament who listened to the call of God and who left everything for what God had asked him to do. Finally, the Archbishop urged the young

missionary to **be a blessing** to others as he has received the enormous blessing of his ordination. The lay associates, parents and friends of the



Missionaries of Africa came all the way for the occasion. They were very much welcomed by the neighboring families. Indeed, the people of Governor Generoso resonate with the name of their town in their generosity and kindness. KUDOS TO SIGABOY!!!

ADTO NA TA BALIK ARON MAGSUROY SUROY SA SIGABOY ...

(Fr. Bernard Monteron)

## *Welcome to Cebu Fr John Itaru !*

**F**r John, you arrived in Cebu (Philippines) last May 2012. Can you tell us who you are and where you come from?

I am Fr John Fabian Itaru of the Missionaries of Africa. I was ordained a missionary priest on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2008, in my home diocese Moshi/Tanzania. I am from Kilimanjaro region; a rather cool region with maximum temperatures of 25° to 28° Celsius. It is a mountainous region and at least 1,000m above sea level. Mt. Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa (5,895m). Our volcanic land is very fertile and favors agriculture; coffee and bananas being the two main products. Banana is the staple food which could be compared to rice in the Philippines.



### **How is the Catholic Church present in the Kilimanjaro region?**

I must say that Kilimanjaro region has achieved much as far as social services are concerned: health, education, women promotion. The Church plays an important part in rendering such services.

The Catholic Church is well established all over the region. In Moshi diocese we have more than 180 diocesan priests. There are 46 parishes and 13 sub parishes. The diocese owns more than 50 secondary schools, primary schools and universities. The presence of local congregations of religious sisters is felt in the diocese. A good example is the local congregation founded in 1931: the Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro. They are about 1,000 sisters. They are involved in various pastoral and social services activities in the diocese; running schools and being present in nearly every parish of our diocese. They run a district hospital (Huruma Hospital) and many other social service centers. In this hospital, sisters not only work as nurses but

are also qualified doctors. In short, the Catholic Church has an impressive presence in the region through her various engagements.

**The Missionaries of Africa are not present in your diocese. How did you come to know them?**

I attended High School in Tabora region from 1994 to 1996. It was during that time that I met the Missionaries of Africa. They were running the parish and giving religion classes in our school. After graduation I went home for other studies in accountancy and computer science. It was only three years later that my desire to be a priest came back. I remembered then the community of Makokora (M.Afr.) that I had seen while in Tabora.



**Why did you join the M.Afr and not another congregation?**

Previously I had an experience with the diocesan seminary but I did not feel attracted to it. At that time my desire to be a priest was not yet clear to me.

I chose the M.Afr. because I was attracted by mission and by the way the Missionaries of Africa in Tabora were realizing their mission. I remember Fr. Real going on bicycle to give religion classes in different schools and how Fr Gabriel

already in his seventies used to search water sources for people with his pendulum. During masses, religion classes and in different unofficial meetings with us, the community of Makokora used to encourage us in our studies. I must say it was demanding to study in Milambo at that time due to mismanagement and the absence of teachers! The experience with the M.Afr. community in Tabora stayed with me for the next three years before I took the decision to join them.

**What is the purpose of your assignment in Cebu?**

I have been asked to study for a master in business administration (MBA) in view of serving the Society of the Missionaries of Africa and the African Church. I will be studying at the University of San Carlos. I am grateful for the trust given to me by my superiors and it is my hope and prayer to be useful after my studies. For this I humbly ask for your prayers.

**What do you expect from being in the Philippines?**

To learn something from the Filipino Church: How it is run, how it administers her human and material resources. This experience will surely help me for my future ministry in Africa.

## *My immersion in the Indigenous People*

I was born and grew up in Manila, the busiest city of our country. I have experienced many kinds of pastoral ministries before. Last April however, my pastoral experience as a Missionaries of Africa Seminarian proved something totally new for me: I stayed with an indigenous family among the **B'laan** people in Sarangani province. I lived with them, ate with them and now I know their situation, struggles, joys and sadness. For a while I walked in their shoes.



We went to Little Baguio, a mission station under Malita Parish in Davao del Sur. It was really a totally new environment for me coming from a metropolis where you can see many buildings. That is why I felt close to nature and enjoyed the travel going to the

PME Lay Associates mission house. They gave me and my two companions, Alvin and Rudisel, a warm welcome.

After a week I was assigned to a remote place called Datal Anggas. I needed to walk for more than seven hours from the Little Baguio mission house.

The journey was not that easy as we had to cross several mountains treading along muddy paths due to the rainy weather. I stayed five days in a family. I really enjoyed my stay with them. I felt as if I was just in my own family's home. They treated me as one of their siblings. It is there that for the first time in my life I tasted frogs! I have seen the unity and concern they have for one another. I was amazed when I saw people really helping each other : farming together or helping old people by grinding corn and pounding coffee for them. It was a manifestation of God's love. "Give food to the hungry!" I thought such places no longer existed in this modern world. I thought it was just written about in books! But the opportunity given to me served as an eye opener.



This pastoral experience deepened my commitment and conviction, my **"YES"** to the Lord; my decision towards the mission and charism of the Missionaries of Africa which is an instrument of God's Love for all humanity, regardless of race, color and nationality. (Rodrigo D. Morales Jr.)



## *Flores de Mayo with the Lay Associate*



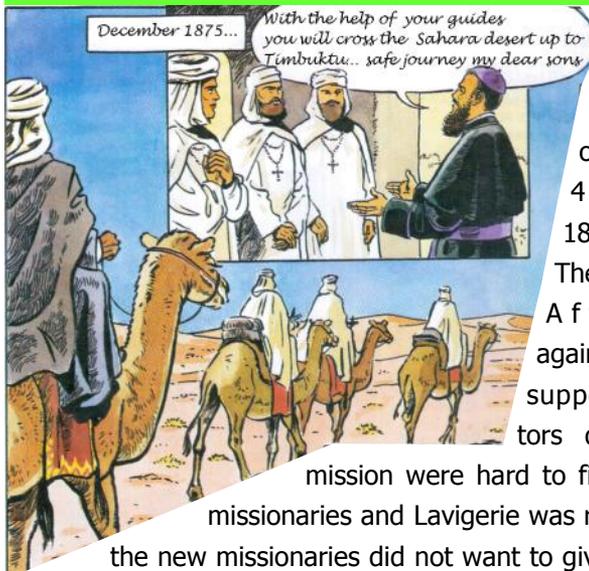
**T**ruly gifted with missionary zeal, the Lay associates of the Missionaries of Africa joined the activities of the month of May commonly known as **Flores de Mayo**. Some of the members participated in the preparatory seminar workshop in catechism which was given by the parish catechists of San Roque. Thus they were given the tools to carry on with the task. San Roque/Sta. Cruz chapel, along A.S. Fortuna St. was the recipient of the said mission. According to Nanay Arsenia, one of the lay members, it was the first ever month-long event that happened in the chapel. Prior to the first day of May, together with Fr. Bernard, we prepared all the necessary things needed. We spent our day there with joyful hearts. We were fed of course by Ate Loids who prepared the food and Fr. Thomas who served as the driver and courier. The first day started with a mass with Fr. Bernard. Around **30 children** of varied ages participated, hence two groups were formed. Each of the group has assigned lay catechists to handle the class. By four o'clock, right after the class and a few minutes break the novena for Flores de Mayo followed. We took turns in leading the novena. From Monday to Thursday every week we spent time with these children until the end of May. Fr. Thomas and Fr. John presided at the mass during the culmination day. We surprised the children with a few little goodies from the Lay



Associates' generous hearts. Seeing the happy faces of the children, the joy of dressing like an angel and the supportive acts of some of the parents indeed made that mission a heart-warming one.  
(Dalia Falco)



### *Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie (7) Offering one's life for the Mission of God*



**O**pening a new institute seldom results in immediate success! Out of 12 candidates who began only 4 ended the first novitiate in 1869.

Then difficulties began to pile up. After the lost war against Germany (1870) financial support from French benefactors dried up. Candidates for the mission were hard to find. In 1871 there were only 8 missionaries and Lavigerie was ready to end the experiment but the new missionaries did not want to give up. Finally Lavigerie accepted to **give it a try** for another 6 months. New efforts were made in France inviting seminarians and priests to join the mission. To attract new missionaries Lavigerie did not use flowery words. In fact he wrote: "The African mission is poor, difficult, hard, and the most forsaken in the world. It offers privations of every kind and often perhaps **martyrdom** ... we are making an appeal to the zeal and generosity ... of those who would like to give themselves to God." The response was both immediate and surprising: 33 men wrote back that they were on their way to Algiers for the novitiate. Among the first arrivals was a young priest who presented his application letter to Lavigerie. He took it and signed it with the words "approved for martyrdom".

Then Lavigerie asked him: "Are you prepared for that?"  
The priest said: "It is what I have come for."

Only a few years later the words of Lavigerie became reality: As the number of missionaries was increasing the time came for Lavigerie to go ahead with



his initial plan: to enter in to the heart of the African continent. Plans were made to send missionaries to cross the desert and reach **Timbuktu**.

On January 14, 1876 three fathers in their twenties departed with seven Tuaregs and camel drivers. For two and half months there was no news from them. At the end of March, rumors seeped back from the desert that they were dead. On Holy Thursday (April 11) upon receiving the news that they have been killed by their guides Lavigerie intoned the *Te Deum* in honor of the first martyrs of the Missionaries of Africa.

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