

Is it true, O God, that ever since  
before the universe was, before any human existed  
you dreamt of each one of us?



Is it true, O God, that you entrusted this tiny planet earth  
to human beings as one family?

Is it true, O God, that ever before you revealed your face  
to Moses in the burning bush  
you dreamt to free all people from any kind of slavery?

Is it true, that in becoming visible to us in Jesus  
bearing Mary's features  
you dreamt to save all peoples?

If this is true how can it be that until today your children are enslaved?  
How can it be that your children are exploited,  
used as objects for profit, their dignity denied, their freedom taken?

I dream, O God, that this Christmas you will send again  
your Son Jesus to save them,  
I dream that you will send your Mother Mary to comfort them,  
I dream that you will send Moses to free them,  
And - let me wake up to trust your dream for me!

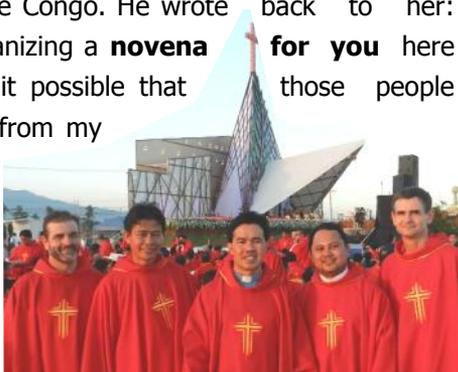


## What makes you passionate for Africa?

**Father Jozef Van Boxel** General assistant of the Missionaries of Africa came from Rome to visit us in Cebu. He shared on his vocation and his passion for Africa.

**I**t started in childhood. As a child I once asked my mother "why is it that we are only two children in our family and not five or more like other families?" "You must be happy that I am still alive" she told me. Then she explained to me that soon after my birth she got Tuberculosis and one third of one of her lungs had to be removed. Before the surgery she contacted her brother who was a Missionary of Africa assigned to the Congo. He wrote back to her: "don't worry. All will be well. We are organizing a **novena for you** here in our parish". All went well! How was it possible that those people who lived thousands of kilometers away from my place and who didn't know my mother could say a novena for her? From that time my sympathy for Africa took root.

From the age of 9 to 15 years old every year in our village I was selling 100 calendars for the mission of the Missionaries of



Africa. I was arguing with potential buyers and not giving up. Once a family did not want to buy it. So I made a deal: "Would you buy my calendar if I walk on my hands around this table?" They said: "Yes!" I did and they bought it.

When I was eighteen and in college, I had to prepare an essay for my final exam. I choose as the topic: "Ujamaa". It was the African vision for a more equal and just society of the late President of Tanzania, **Julius Nyerere**. Later on I wrote to the Missionaries of Africa that I wanted to go to Africa. Surprisingly they came to visit me in my school. And the priest who came to see me had been in Tanzania before. That is how I joined the M.Afr.

I was rather disgusted by the consumerism in Western Europe and I wanted to find an alternative way of living, **something worthwhile to live for**. I joined the M.Afr for a cause but not yet for a person: Christ.

Finally what changed me was "the word of life". There was a group of youth from the Focolare coming once a month to our seminary. Listening to their sharing and how they were trying to live the Gospel in their daily lives I realized that there was something greater than dedicating one's life to a cause: it was to dedicate one's life to a person: Christ.

**Fr Jozef Van Boxel** M.Afr. Rome

## Hope for Christmas

Christmas has been always an exciting moment for many. It is a time of togetherness among relatives and friends. A time when we extend our helping hands and share what we have with those in need and to receive as well something from the generosity of others.

### **How did the people whom I worked with respond to the example of Christ?**

As in many countries in Africa, relationships among relatives, neighbours and friends are at the heart of Zambian culture. The Spirit of togetherness and sharing shows in their daily life. (marriage celebrations, funerals etc.) There is a proverb in Bemba that says; **“Umunwe umo: tausala nda.”**

It literally means one finger cannot pick lice. Which means unity or togetherness gives strength. We can do nothing if we are not united with Christ and with our fellow brothers and sisters. This is what strengthened the people in the parish where I was doing my ministry. They were always united in prayer whether in the Small Christian Communities, Lay Groups or in the Parish at large. Unity brought a lot of changes and made people feel that they belonged to one family, the family of Christ.



This kind of environment made people more generous in sharing what they had. There was a time when I said to myself that, really they live life like that of the first Christian Community. *"The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his/her own but they had everything in common."* (Acts 4:32) The struggle to urge the parishioners to contribute something for the poor was no more. People were always ready to extend a helping hand for the benefit of others. This is the experience that I treasure so much when the time of Christmas comes.

As Christmas is fast approaching let us hope that our togetherness may give more meaning to our Christian life.

**Fr. Dioscoro Malugao** M.Afr. Zambia



## Christmas in Zambia

Even in my most fantastic dreams I never imagined I would one day reach the vast continent of Africa, yet only a year ago, on September 2011, I touched African soil for the first time in my life when my plane landed in Lusaka, the Zambian capital. Zambia is 6,600 miles away from the Philippines (18 hours by plane). The journey to the northern town of Kasama, where the novitiate of the Missionaries of Africa is located, took me a further 13 hours by bus.



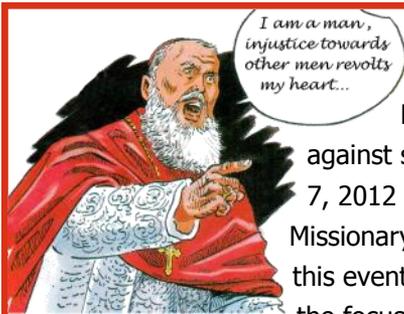
On arrival I was greeted by people from different countries **from all over the world**: Filipinos and Indians from Asia, Germans, Polish, French, and Dutch from Europe, a Canadian representing the North American subcontinent and Nigerians, Burundians, Burkinabe, Ethiopians, Mozambicans, Congolese, Togolese, Kenyans, Ghanaians, Malawians, Tanzanians and Zambians making up the African part of our group. Although from different backgrounds and cultures we gathered together to form a single community with one purpose: to become missionaries of good news. It took me only a few weeks to acclimatize and to take my first steps in the local language (Cibemba) as a way to connect with the Zambian culture.

It was my first time to celebrate Christmas away from my home country! I felt home-sick, normal for a first timer like me, but still not easy to cope with. What really helped me to feel Christmas without singing familiar carols, exchange of gifts and enjoyment of roasted meat was the emphasis on the religious aspect of celebrating Jesus' birth. Singing in church, accompanied by the beating of drums and dancing was a **great experience** that made up for what I was missing. Christmas joy in Zambia means a new set of clothes to be worn at the church service. Many Zambians are poor, unable to afford expensive presents



for their kids. There aren't too many toy stores in rural Zambia anyway. If gifts are exchanged they usually come in the form of school-books, soap, clothing, candles or other practical goods. It's a simple Christmas celebration, yet expressive of the true spirit of Christmas.

**Christopher Manzano Rabelas** M.Afr.  
(Pastoral year in Tanzania)



### Note from the editor:

125 years ago our Founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie launched an international campaign against slavery in the Church of Gesù in Rome. On Nov 7, 2012 the Missionaries of Africa together with the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa commemorated this event in the same church with a prayer liturgy in the focusing on the reality of human trafficking today!

There will be other exhibitions, talks and prayers worldwide up until December 8, 2013 the solemnity of Mary Immaculate, patron of the two missionary societies founded by Lavigerie. During the year 2013 we will publish articles on this concern especially on today's new forms of slavery.

## *Human Trafficking.... 21<sup>st</sup> Century Slaves - The silent epidemic*

*Extract of the conference given by Sr. Maggie Kennedy MSOLA in Rome on human trafficking for the Celebration of the 125 years of the anti-slavery campaign launched by Cardinal Lavigerie.*

### **D**oes Human Trafficking really exist?

Yes, but it takes many different forms. It touches families like yours and mine, ordinary people and families who are drawn into a deep dark pit of hopelessness, often through poverty, money, greed and sometimes adventure and power.

I became involved in this struggle in 2010 on my return to Kenya. An Assumption Sister of Nairobi shared with me how her two nieces applied for jobs having seen an advert in the newspaper. It offered a good salary and many perks. They called the agency. They were asked to go for an interview. They were very excited and prepared themselves. They left the house happy together, with their parents as excited as they were....They left....never to be seen again alive...

Where are they now? We cannot imagine the trauma for their families not knowing where they are and what has happened to them...no funeral...no laying to rest, no grieving. What of the other families????

Human Trafficking is the world's best money earner after drugs and small arms. It is estimated by US Government's yearly report TIP that in 2011, 32 billion US Dollars was made out of the innocent blood of 800,000 human persons who were trafficked... (The 2011 budget of the



Philippines was 37 billion US Dollars) It is estimated that 12.3 million adults and children are currently held in modern day slavery which includes forced labour and prostitution.

Our whole way of life and ways of relating are being challenged. Human Trafficking is around us and in us...that insistent silent scream....the voices of persons not able to defend themselves... During the 80's alone, more women and children were enslaved by trafficking from Asia than all the people sold into slavery from Africa in 400 years of the Slave trade...

### **Kenya in the front line**

Kenya, where I work, is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking... The situation is horrendous and a silent epidemic is rising especially in Nairobi and Mombasa which is a real "hot" spot because of the tourist industry.

### **How are people trafficked?**

It happens easily and sometimes people are too gullible and sucked in without realizing and not questioning the offers they receive. We can all be blind. But once hooked victims may be threatened and force may be used...

### **What is the Catholic Church saying to us today?**

Vatican II in 1965 reaffirmed the same concern. "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, disgraceful working conditions where people are treated as mere tools, for profit rather than as free responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison society and are a supreme dishonour to the Creator"(Gaudium et Spes,1965)

In a message to the Seventh Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism in 2012 Pope Benedict XVI wrote "The trafficking of human persons or organ harvesting as well as the exploitation of minors abandoned into the hands of individuals without scruples and undergoing abuse and torture sadly often happens". He asks... to fight against this process. (23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012-Vatican Information Service).

### **What can we do concretely?**

The Catholic Church has the best possible network in the world to eradicate "Trafficking in Persons". The focus is clear : Human Trafficking is the violation of human dignity which is a God-given gift.

We are called to:

- Challenge the whole economic order to focus on the eradication of poverty...
- Workshops for Bishops, Priests, Religious men and





women together with the laity. These are needed to fully understand the complexity and horrific situation that exists.

Small Christian Communities are our way to the grassroots in the rural areas and urban areas including the slums. In Machakos near Nairobi the Awareness Against Human Trafficking Collaboration have worked together with the Bishop and their Caritas Office. We have had Training of Trainers Sessions in order to reach out to every corner of the Diocese which has 900,000 Catholics, 62 parishes and now 11 teams as there are 11 Deaneries. The enthusiasm to do something is enormous... Now we have some victim support. The reports are often heartbreaking.

The Good Samaritan. This is a well known story but have we ever thought about converting the robbers?

**Sr. Maggi Kennedy MSOLA** (Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa) 24<sup>th</sup> August 2012

### *Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie (9) The anti-slavery campaign*

**W**e rely especially on you, Eminence, to ensure the success of the difficult works and missions in Africa. We know your dynamic and intelligent zeal; we know what you have done up to now and we are confident that you will not give up until you have successfully concluded your great undertakings."

Said **Pope Leo XIII** to Cardinal Lavigerie 125 years ago. This was the approval and encouragement from the Pope the Cardinal had wished for when he visited him with a number of young Africans who had been liberated from slavery.

Missionaries sent by Lavigerie had been sending heart-breaking reports describing the horrific reality of slavery perpetuated in the south of Algeria and the East African territories. Lavigerie could no longer remain passive in this situation. Something had to be done!

For Lavigerie to bring the Good News to the center of Africa was to bring freedom and hope through faith. *"I have seen the **misery of my people...** I have heard them crying for help, and I have come down to rescue them. So come here; I am sending you..."Ac 7:34*

As Cardinal and one of the well-known members of the Roman Curia and on account of his youthful age he asked Pope Leo XIII to include in his Encyclical letter (on the abolition of slavery in Brazil: *In Plurimis* May 1888) the urgent

For Lavigerie's time and in fact since 1808 the slave trade to America from West Africa was not longer operative. But there was still a trans-Saharan slave trade. On the East coast of Africa it was also present. In 1870 it brought 35,000 slaves annually to Zanzibar.

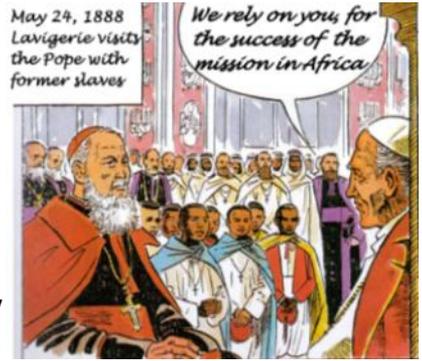
need to end slavery in Africa. With the Pope's blessing he had the necessary backing to launch an **international campaign** against slavery in the African interior.

He left Algiers in June 1888 to arouse public concern by speaking before large audiences in Paris, London, Brussels, Rome. From his heart rose a deep cry: "*I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me. I am a*

*man, and injustice towards others revolts my heart...*" By every possible means, especially by involving the media at the time he brought to public awareness in Europe a situation which people thought no longer existed in its cruel reality. In other countries (Spain, Portugal, Austria, Holland, Germany, Switzerland) he was able to make contact with leading personalities to set up anti-slavery committees.

Religious leaders from different Christian denominations who regarded each other as enemies attended his talks and agreed to cooperate to end these sufferings. Heads of European governments which were in tense rivalry agreed to collaborate to end slavery.

At great cost to himself – he put his health at stake having to withstand enormous resistance and pressures from all sides – Cardinal Lavigerie through his anti-slavery campaign became a catalyst that inspired a forceful international movement, transcending religious and national divisions in response to an urgent humanitarian cause.



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*The Missionaries of Africa*

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*Wish you a*

*Merry Christmas and a*

*Blessed New Year 2013*

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