



# AFRICA CALLING

Newsletter of the Missionaries  
of Africa in the Philippines

2/2013

## EDITORIAL

**T**he Marian month of May took off joyfully in our house on May 3, 2013 with the arrival of the statue of Our Lady of Africa. A generous gift of a close friend of our community. It so happened that the day marked the 140th anniversary of the installation of the original statue by our founder Cardinal Lavigerie in the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers (May 4,1873).

The one in Algiers is a representation of Mary created by a French citizen, Mr. Bouchardon. Originally she was called "Virgo Fidelis". It is her image that is displayed on the famous "Miraculous Medal" of the rue du Bac (Paris).

Bishop Dupuch of Algiers was instrumental in having a replica of this statue made of silver brought to Algiers in 1843. Thirty years later, upon completion of the Basilica, the statue was solemnly installed by Cardinal Lavigerie. On the day of her solemn crowning as Our Lady of Africa (April 30, 1876) the Cardinal reminded the congregation present: *"Do not be content with a gold crown being placed on your Queen's head for it is but a symbol. Rather, give her your hearts for it is this she asks of you. It is in this way that you will truly acknowledge her as queen."* A further ten years later Mary, Our Lady of Africa was robed with a traditional gown.



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Basilica of Our Lady of Africa

The presence of Our Lady of Africa in our chapel connects us with the roots of our Society entrusted to the protection of Mary Immaculate Queen of Africa by our founder. **E.L.**

## *Flores de Mayo at the Missionaries of Africa*

**D**uring the month of May, the Philippines have a special feast called "Flores de Mayo" (Flowers of May).

Every afternoon during May in parishes all over the Philippines children are catechized and flowers are offered to honor "Mama Mary". The Lay Associates and the scholars of the Missionaries of Africa decided to have it here in our house for the third consecutive year. Seventy to eighty children from 5 to 13 years old from the neighboring Barangays of Paulton and Jasmin were invited. They were given catechism and lessons on the different virtues and values that should be practiced in daily life.



The Flores the Mayo, like most feasts was introduced by the Spaniards during their occupation. This year the feast ended with a procession within St Nino Village during which the children and adults dressed up to personify different religious figures (Sagalas). Each Sagala holds a symbol that represents the different titles of the Virgin Mary in the Litany. The Sagalas - princes and princesses - are dressed as part of a royal entourage, for they are the forerunners of the last person in the procession which is Reyna Elena or Queen Helena, the mother of the first Christian emperor Constantine. Reyna Elena was believed to have found the Holy Cross during her expedition to the Holy Land. The highlight of the activity was the procession of the new statue of Our Lady of Africa which was generously given to us by



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a dear friend. Kudos (best wishes) to him and his family.

The month long feast ended after the procession with a short program for the kids together with some snacks. Awards were given to kids who had shown exemplary work and dedication. With the closing of the month, we the Lay Associates believe that with these activities we are spreading the word of the Lord and helping the Missionaries of Africa to be better known.



**Frankie**

*My Gratitude to all*

*Fr. Bernard Monteron M. Afr. has been in charge of the Missionaries of Africa in the Philippines for 7 years. This coming August he will handover his responsibilities to his incoming successor Fr. Dioscoro Pancito Malugao from Baclayon/Bohol. We are grateful to Bernard for his dedication during these years.*



Looking back at life with gratitude is the privilege of a few individuals. I am glad that at the end of my appointment to the Philippines, I can look back with joy at events in those seven years of service and mis-

sion. They were not always the golden days of joy and success but they were colorful enough to teach me life's lessons. They taught me patience, contentment and gratitude. I am now ready to venture into new horizons. There were many opportunities for growth that required sacrifices. I thank God for them and especially the people I met along the way. There were those who made life wonderful while others came along with challenges. What I know is that

I learned from both.

The Directors of Vocations in the Philippines (DVP) became a big part of my life during my work here in the Philippines as a vocation promoter. I was involved at both national and local levels. I learned a lot from fellow vocation promoters and made a lot of friends



while doing so. I also had the chance to visit many dioceses and places in our country. This is a privilege vocation promoters have in their ministry. I also had the chance to live with very different yet dedicated and concerned confreres in the community. It was most enriching when we were able to support, to reach out to one another and offer forgiveness when necessary.

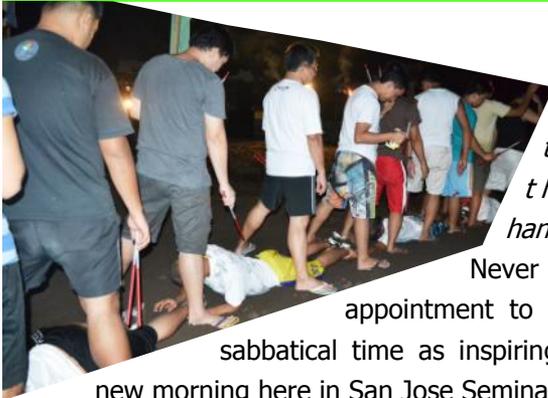
Last of all, I always enjoyed the support of friends who were and will always be there for me in various moments of life. They taught me in their simplicity and dedication. Like St. Therese of the Child Jesus who never failed to admire and do the little things in life in order to glorify God.



My gratitude to all of you.

**Fr. Bernard Monteron, M.Afr.**

## *Sabbatical Time in San Jose Seminary, Manila*



**O**nly few people seem to realize what God could make of their lives, if only they were ready to fully surrender themselves into God's hands!" (Ignatius of Loyola)

Never would I have dreamt that my appointment to the Philippines would climax with sabbatical time as inspiring as the sunrises that greet each new morning here in San Jose Seminary.

San Jose, founded in 1601 - the oldest seminary in the Philippines, is a Jesuit-run formation house for diocesan seminarians from all over the Philippines.

Aside from modules in spirituality at the Center for Ignatian Spirituality (CIS) and courses in pastoral theology at the Loyola School of Theology my sabbatical at San Jose affords me the happy opportunity to live in community with diocesan seminarians from many dioceses in the Philippines. Although my lack of

Tagalog has been an impediment during conversations, I am glad for regular opportunities to maintain my practice of Cebuano with seminarians from the Visayas and Mindanao.

During our recent picnic at the beginning of the new academic year I was included among the neophytes to be initiated as *Josefinos* (= *San Jose seminarian*). After a long day of challenging tests of endurance and conviction for the seminarians the initiation climaxed with a 200-m crawl along the sandy shore of a beach resort that hosted us for the event.

Having been exempted from the more daunting challenges of the initiation I am filled with gratitude that my inclusion as "Talking Snail" in the final crawl afforded me the privilege to be counted as the first Missionary of Africa-*Josefino*.

**Fr. Thomas Schwiedessen, M.Afr.**



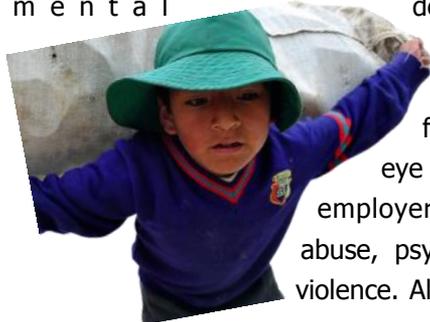
## Child Labour



All children must be able to play, study, pray and grow, in their families, in a harmonious context, in love and serenity. This is their right and our duty. A serene childhood allows children to look with confidence towards life and tomorrow. Woe to those who stifle them in their joyful enthusiasm and hope!" (Pope Francis on June 12, 2013, the World Day Against Child Labor).

Out of 300 million child laborers worldwide, at least 10.5 million children are working as domestic workers in people's homes, in hazardous and sometimes slave-like conditions. 6.5 million are aged between 5 and 14 years-old and more than 71% are girls.

The term "child labor" is often defined as "work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development." (International Labour Organization/ILO)



These children are often isolated from their families; they can be hidden from the public eye and they're highly dependent on their employers. They are exposed to physical abuse, psychological abuse, frequently also to sexual violence. Although they suffer hardly anyone is ready to



listen to them.

They have to endure in silence, their pain buried within themselves.

It is possible to reduce child labor through increasing family income and by supporting children to remain in school. (Sources: Radio Vatican; UN-ILO report June 12, 2013)

*"I only received money on four or five occasions since I've been working there, to buy sandals or a few other items. I occasionally received clothes that used to belong to my employer's daughter. She says that because I receive board and lodging I have no right to anything else."*

*(Interview with Ms S. Danuwar, 24, who started domestic work at the age of 7)*



## *Our Founder Cardinal Lavignerie (11) Uganda's Martyrs*

**I**t did not take long for king Mutesa to threaten the Christians (both Protestant and Catholic). King Mutesa was a person of unpredictable moods, often changing from kindness to violent anger, then again acting like a repentant child before Fr. Lourdel. His prime minister who hated the Christians knew how to manipulate the king's mood.

Joseph Mukasa was the head of the royal household with 400 royal attendants under him. Charles Lwanga was his assistant. Joseph was protecting the Christians from the King's acts of pedophilia and was openly asking him to end these practices. One day the king lost patience: *"How dare a mere servant scold me, the king in person? Let me have him put to death!"*

Before being beheaded and burned Joseph said: *"What? To bind me?"*



*"A Christian who lays down his life for God is not afraid of death!"* (Nov 15, 1885)

Rather than weakening the Christians' faith Joseph Mukasa's strengthened them in their courage! The king continued to threaten the Christians, many of them catechumens, who were fully aware that they too could be put to death at anytime.

Many among the Christian believers happened to be sons of chiefs and most were loyal servants, a possible reason that kept the king vacillating in his attitude. Finally the time came when the King's mind was set on ending the Christian presence in his palace.

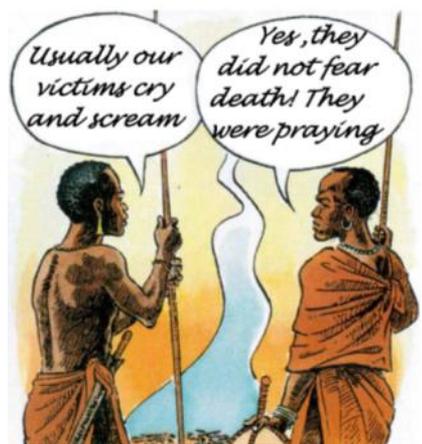


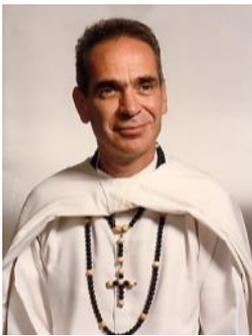
Realizing the king's determination to exterminate all Christians Charles Lwanga gathered the catechumens for baptism. During one of the parades the king commanded: *"Let those who are Christians step forward!"* Charles was the first to move, followed by the

youngest, Kizito (about 14 years old). Immediately the others also joined the line, 22 Catholics and 7 Protestants. They boldly refused the king's command to renounce their faith. Either tortured to death or burnt alive their prayerful attitude amazed their executioners.

When the persecution had prevented some of the catechumens from joining the Easter celebrations Fr. Lourdel remembered Charles Lwanga saying: "We failed at Easter, but we shall make up for it on Ascension Day. On that feast we shall be there!" Truly, on Ascension day, June 3, 1886, Charles Lwanga gave witness to his faith by a martyr's death. When Fr. Lourdel died of sickness on May 12, 1890 there were 2,197 baptized and more than 10,000 catechumens, only eight years after the first missionaries' arrival.

Both Catholics and Anglicans are remembered and celebrated as Martyrs of Uganda. 22 of them were beatified by Pope Benedict XV. on 6th June, 1920 and canonized by Pope Paul VI. on 18th October, 1964.





Fr. Etienne Renaud, born in France, former superior general of the Missionaries of Africa (1986-1992) died on June 20, 2013 at the age of 76; It was under his leadership that the Missionaries of

Africa established communities in India and the Philippines. He worked in Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, Italy, Tanzania, Sudan and France. He has been president of the PISAI (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies) in Rome from 1994 to 2000.

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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».

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