



# AFRICA CALLING

Newsletter of the Missionaries of Africa in the Philippines

1/2014

## EDITORIAL

Shepherds are recognized when they carry "the smell of the sheep" (Evangelii Gaudium, 24). The articles in this newsletter communicate how missionaries get in touch with people and like good shepherds smell like the sheep being tended. Being missionary involves willingness to risk, to leave familiar surroundings, to not stay within one's comfort zone, to venture into uncharted territory and to initiate new things with people of a different cultural mindset from one's own. The ideal may not always be attained, but learning happens along the way. Missionaries are enriched by their encounters. It is a win-win experience. Get involved, "seek those who have fallen away,... welcome the outcast" encourages Pope Francis. Taking on "the smell of the sheep" is another form of becoming "all to all" as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 9,22). It is an expression that was dear to our founder Cardinal Lavigerie. He reminded his missionaries to be close to the people they are sent to by learning their languages and valuing their cultures... *"To learn people's language is to prepare to belong to them. Language is the most powerful vehicle of feelings and ideas"* (Conference given in 1885).



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Our being missionary will show in our readiness to learn new ways letting the smell of yet unfamiliar sheep rub off on us.

On April 6 some youth will come to live with us for a month, to experience the life of the Missionaries of Africa and to discern if God is calling them to become Missionary in Africa. We ask you to accompany them with your prayers. **E.L.**

## *Giving and Receiving through Catechism*



People have different perceptions on what catechesis is. But for us catechesis is our way of sharing our thoughts and beliefs based on the doctrines. Doing so we can mold people to become better persons and we are able to inspire and motivate young minds to follow the right path in life. Exploring things through our service to mankind will always be a great pleasure. We have faced various obstacles but still, we are willing to extend our love, share our beliefs and spread our learning to the children. We can see in their eyes the thirst for the word of God. This reinforce our eagerness to preach God's words.

In the three years of conducting catechesis, we were able to touch lives of the young people from Paulton and Jasmin. Moreover, our own lives have changed through different realizations.

- We realized that there is nothing impossible when we are optimistic.
- Teaching children from different backgrounds we learn to be flexible and to adapt to them.

Our way of dealing with others is different now.

- We become more patient and responsible.
- The bonding that we have achieved with the children in the catechesis helps us to become more mature individuals as well as being more organized in our own lives. In other words, our way of living has changed.



"Living simply. Loving generously. Speaking truthfully. Breathing deeply. Doing our best. Leaving everything else to the power above us" – these are the things we gain from our service.

By : **Letlie Semblante, Jesuel Cono,  
Leo Ceniza, Jessel C. Ostria**

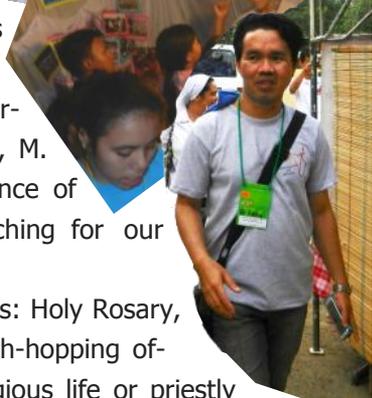
## Vocation Jamboree 2014

**O**n February 22, 2014 the annual Vocation Jamboree was held at the University of San Jose Recoletos, Basak campus under the theme **"Vocation: Sign of Hope founded on Faith"** (Bokasyon: Ti-maan sa paglaum tinukod diha sa pagtoo.) It was attended by almost four thousands young women and men coming from different schools and universities trying to find their vocation. Fr. Loloy Poe, M. Afr., proposed the acronym **"P-R-A-Y"** (Presence of Jesus, Reconciliation, Adoration, Yield) in searching for our vocation.

The program unfolded as a carousel in three parts: Holy Rosary, talk on the theme and booth-hopping. The booth-hopping offered the opportunity to those interested in religious life or priestly ministry to discern what congregation would inspire them by its specific charism. As a missionary of Africa candidate I was able to take part in facilitating a small group-sharing with fifteen youths participating. It was my first such experience. "As a first timer not knowing exactly what to do I felt a little nervous and afraid they might not listen to me". Yet, there was no problem as I just followed the tips on how to facilitate a group we had learned during a seminar we attended prior to the vocation jamboree. The group sharing took off well and I was able to overcome my fear.

For me the vocation jamboree was a valuable event. It helped me to discover and learn more about consecrated life. Bishop Emilio Bataclan presided over the Eucharist as the day broke at 5.30 a.m. and managed to keep us awake with a lively, inspiring and entertaining homily.

**Phil Xandry Aparece (M. Afr. Seminarian)**



## *Training the youth towards self reliance...*

*Brother Lito Doguiles, M. Afr. from Maitum, Baybay, Leyte has been the Archdiocesan youth-coordinator in Tabora, Tanzania. Having spent his holidays in 2012 enhancing his culinary management skills he now reports on the progress of the youth-formation program since then.*

When I returned to Tabora in 2012 things were going well as the Young Catholic Workers' implementation of their three-year plan (2010 - 2012) had come into full swing with many of the youth leaders involved in the formation program. As part of this program, I had started to train youth who were into hospitality trade skills like commercial cooking, baking and pastries production, bar-tending, food and beverage servicing in view of our entrepreneurial program with employment, skills training and self-reliance as the three integral components of youth-formation.

We managed to get a place for food servicing at the Catholic University St. Augustine of Tanzania/Tabora Branch which was also the venue of the youth's training. At the beginning of 2013 we managed to get a place for selling bread and cakes

produced by the trained youth. I had told the youth that they would be the potential trainers when the program of the Center would be ready. That was promising indeed!

A setback along the way was the working attitude of the youth. My awareness of their background - most of them primary school leavers and some coming from broken families, all of them were struggling to make ends meet - helped me to persevere patiently.

These youth under training were also active in Church activities like Choir membership and even leadership. Despite of all those self-awareness seminars at the workplace their behavior was different and sadly they lacked trustworthiness. Consequently my team decided to close the canteen service and the bakery at the university waiting for a time to offer short courses at the Resource Learning Center.

What had happened could be compared to a very demanding examination



aimed at identifying those who possessed qualities of being good workers and trainers for the entrepreneurial program. Out of ten we managed to get three with a good family background as their common strength.

This year 2014 Tabora Resource Learning Center commences its short courses offering in Commercial Cooking and Baking and Pastries Production. One of the well trained youths was chosen to assist me in the program.

On the whole I have learned a lot. Firstly, I decided to continue trusting even when others did not prove trustworthy. Secondly I believe that there is no real development or economic prosperity if there is no inner transformation starting from an individual self, and lastly, I have come to recognize the importance of a family in molding the character of every person.



**Br. Lito Doguiles, M. Afr.**

### *Being an Indian Missionary of Africa*

*Fr. Sabu is a Missionary of Africa from India. After he had been missioned to Ethiopia for five years he was placed in charge of vocation animation and formation of aspirants in India. Recently he visited our community in Cebu. He shares his vocation story and tells of his missionary experience.*

I never thought of becoming a priest or a missionary until I reached the age of 15. I used to pray regularly and felt God close to me and I myself close to my God.

I wanted to do something for humanity. I felt a deep concern for sick people and those on the margins of society. I believe my vocation started with the desire to make a change doing something for my brothers and sisters.

When I was in High School a vocation director's visit awakened my desire to consider a missionary vocation. I became interested in religious life.

When I noticed an advertisement by the Missionaries of Africa to join and work in Africa I wrote to them and met the vocation director. I was touched by what

#### **India:**

Population : 1,03 billion.

Area: 3.1 million sq km

(10 times the Philippines)

Hindus 80% , Islam 13%,

Christians of different de-

nominations 2% (24 mil-

lion).

he told me about Africa and the challenges of missionary life. I have always been attracted by challenges. I followed where my heart told me to go and joined the formation at the age of 21.

I enjoyed the community life with German and Dutch Missionaries of Africa. Learning and discovering more about the African continent I was encouraged to continue the formation. I felt that this was where I belonged.

After three years I was sent to Tanzania for the Spiritual Year (novitiate). I am grateful for that time as I grew spiritually, intellectually and humanly. It was the time of my life.

After the novitiate I was sent for two years of apostolic training to Ethiopia. It was a time of confirmation from God. Theology studies in London (Totteridge) completed my formation and I happily accepted the grace of becoming a priest. I was ordained priest in 2004.

My first assignment was in Ethiopia. Any Catholic going to Ethiopia is touched by the Orthodox Christians' deep spirituality. Fasting twice a week throughout the year (no meat, no milk or eggs on Wednesday and Friday). I was confused and troubled because it was beyond my capacity to follow them. I felt that I was far from the faith of these people while I was a priest who was supposed to lead.



Missionaries of Africa Seminary in India

### **Ethiopia:**

Population : 86.5 million

Area: 1.13 million sq.km

(3.8 times the Philippines)

Christianity began in the 4th Century and became part of the Orthodox Church. Between the 13th-18th century there were various attempts to re-introduce Catholicism, the most recent in 1846. Christians 62% (43% of the total population are Orthodox, 18% Protestants 0.7 % Catholic) and 33% Muslims.



Youth Development Centre, Ethiopia

Economically the country is poor many are struggling to get their daily bread. Many children go to school without eating until they are home for supper. Our community organized feeding programs and other social activities.

People are very hospitable ready to share the little they have. The country

is beautiful with amazing churches built of rock!

In 2010 I was assigned to India for vocation animation and formation of the aspirants. India has a great variety of cultures and the sense of God is very much present. The religious dimension of life is important for people in India and there is less attachment to the material things of life.

The Missionaries of Africa's presence in India provides an opportunity to think of the Church not only in the Western world but also on the African continent. It offers an invitation to life-long service of the Church with a great need of missionaries. Africa is beautiful. To serve among God's people there is even more beautiful.

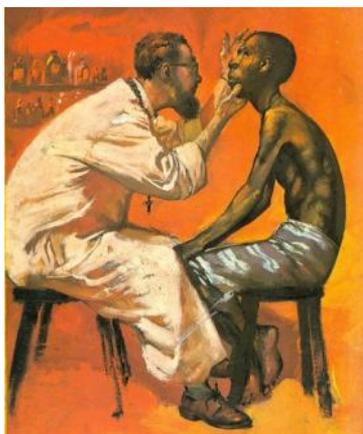
**Fr. Sabu Puthenpurackal**



### *Our History: Jean-Louis Garnisson alias Dr. Light*

**I**t was during the 1st world war at the front between France and Germany in January 1916.

One day an order had to be passed on by hand. One of my companions was sent but he became an easy target for the enemy and was shot in the head. Another had to replace him. As soon as he went out he too was killed. A third and fourth were killed as well. Suddenly I realized that it was my turn to try the impossible! I thought of my family, my God. I ran and jumped as fast as I could. Twenty minutes later I handed over the order. I was alive!



I wondered: for what have I been saved? I did not know the answer then.

I was born in 1897 in Britany (France) as the only child of my parents. After the war had ended I studied medicine then applied to the Missionaries of Africa without my parents' consent. I was afraid that they would oppose my decision. Finally they heard about it. One day they came to visit the seminary. They had a long talk with the rector... After their visit I asked to be sent to Algiers (North Africa) in order to continue my formation and get away from my parents. Yet, my

father travelled all the way to Algiers crossing France and the Mediterranean sea asking me to leave the Missionaries of Africa. I could have died 100 times during

the war so how can't they accept to have me far from home? Then some months later my mother came. This was more challenging for me but how could I give up the call of God? After my ordination I went home and my parents welcomed me. They now knew and had accepted that my commitment was for life.

I was assigned to Burkina-Faso and began to work against the sleeping sickness transmitted by Tsetse flies. We eventually managed to control this disease. So many came to me with eye-diseases that I soon realized that I would never be able to cope. Some came from as far as 200 km distance. I needed help to perform operations. I had no choice but to find help where I was. I began to train some West-African Sisters. They had no qualification in medicine so I had to give them the basics and to train them for simple operations. I used to get eyes of dead animals to train my students. After 6 weeks two sisters could remove cataracts and in a year twelve of them were doing it every day. Now we have people coming from the neighboring countries (Ghana, Nigeria and Ivory Coast). Fr. Goarnisson became to be known as "Doctor Light". He published a medical guide for Africa, a book on Islam and collected thousands of proverbs. After his death in France in 1981 the government of Burkina-Faso arranged for his body to be brought back for burial as hero in the land which had been his home for forty-five years. **Fr. E. Lengaigne M.Afr.**



**Is God calling me  
to be Priest or Brother?  
Come and See!**

**1 month experience with  
The Missionaries of Africa  
Cebu April 6 - May 3, 2014**

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