



# AFRICA CALLING



3/2014

## NEWSLETTER OF THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA IN THE PHILIPPINES

World Mission Sunday, which this year will be celebrated on 19 October 2014, is a special day in the life of the Church. It is a time to reflect upon the overall missionary dimension of the Church and also to pray, in a particular way, for those people who have left their homes and countries to share their faith with peoples in different corners of our world.

To be missionary is not the exclusive task of a small group of priests, sisters and brothers who move away from their home countries to live in foreign lands. To be missionary is at the very foundation of our Church. To be missionary is to fulfill the last words of Jesus to his disciples: ***"...Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time..." (Mk. 28:19-20)*** In this way, the mission entrusted to the Church is not our mission, but the continuation of the mission of Jesus in our world today and Jesus reminds us of his presence in carrying out this mission.

In his message, addressed to all of us as we celebrate Mission Sunday, Pope Francis begins his letter with the following words:

***"...Today vast numbers of people still do not know Jesus Christ. For this reason, the mission ad gentes continues to be most urgent. All the members of the Church are called to participate in this mission, for the Church is missionary by her very nature: she was born "to go forth". World Mission Day is a privileged moment when the faithful of various continents engage in prayer and concrete gestures of solidarity in support of the young Churches in mission lands. It is a celebration of grace and joy. A celebration of grace, because the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, offers wisdom and strength to those who are obedient to his action. A celebration of joy, because Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, sent to evangelize the world, supports and accompanies our missionary efforts..."***

I know from my own missionary experience in Africa, that there are so many people, most of whom I don't even know, who provide generously in different ways for the mission to continue. It is impossible for us to carry out our mission or to complete the projects we are involved in without the help of such people. One example of this are the projects here in the Philippines for which we have been able to provide assistance with following Typhoon Yolanda, which hit parts of the Philippines about 9 months ago. You will read an update some of the things that have been done in this area in this current edition of our newsletter.

The Missionaries of Africa thank all who support us in our missionary endeavors here in the Philippines and beyond. We thank you for your interest in our missions throughout Africa and for your continued support of our candidates, who are preparing themselves for mission. Let us continue to work together. The mission belongs to the Church and we are the Church!

Fr Paul Johnston, M.Afr.

## THOUGHTS AFTER TYPHOON YOLANDA



Richard Sopsop and Family in front of new house

*(The effects of Typhoon Yolanda, which hit parts of the Philippines in December 2013, are still fresh in the minds of the people of this country. Since the Typhoon hit, the reconstruction has been on-going and efforts have been made to help those affected to rebuild their homes and their lives. With the help of a Typhoon Fund that was set up by the Missionaries of Africa, we, working with other partners, have been able to help a few families in need to get a new start. In the following article, Fr. Charles Timoney, M.Afr. relates a few of these experiences)*

It's eight months now since Yolanda struck. Many NGOs and individuals have contributed to getting people back on their feet. A lot has been done. Not least by the Pro Infante Sisters with whom we have been involved with our Typhoon Fund.



Sr. Jeanette - Pro Infante et Familia

I single out these Sisters and their helpers because of what I will call their missionary style. They are embedded (to use a military word) with their people. They work the coalface and know the lie of the cultural landscape. They've wisely put one man only in charge of and responsible for maintaining the chain saws. He travels over the mountain from village to village. I've seen these Sisters getting people working together by calling up the traditional Bayanihan spirit of the Filipinos. One such person helped was Lodi, who is mentally challenged. The community, with that same, beautiful cooperative spirit takes care of her. We helped build her new house.

The Sisters will not give free handouts. No Santa Claus syndrome with them! They insist the people, whose dignity they consider paramount, contribute to their houses either in cash or in kind. The father of the family has to be the carpenter's mate. They have to pay to wood-cutter (a good principle but the really poor – those who cannot hold the proverbial fishing rod – will be discreetly helped). Richard was a carpenter's mate and discovered a hidden talent - he will now be trained as a wood carver. This will supplement his farming income. With five children he will need it all.



Lodi Cueva—lives alone in her new house

The people of this remote mountain village told Sr. Jeanette:

*"No one else came here. But you did. You are a blessing for us."*

Dietrick Bonhoeffer suggested that a blessing is "a visible, perceptible, effective proximity of God". Wow! Can you think of a better way of being a missionary?



Sr. Jeanette and Helper

We take this opportunity to thank all who contributed to our Typhoon Fund and the different people who have helped us in our project. With your assistance, we have been able to help a number of families begin to rebuild their lives in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda. The story has not yet ended. The slow reconstruction process continues. There is still much work to be done. We continue to hold all who have been affected by Typhoon Yolanda in our prayers.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES IN LITTLE BAGUIO



*Hilario (Larry) Villaver Jr. and Phil Xandry Aparece are second year candidates in our formation centre in Cebu. For a period of one month, they went to Little Baguio for a period of immersion. They write to share some of their experiences of this time and how it has helped them to better understand the mission they feel called to.*

On March 23, 2014, I went to Malita, more particularly to “Little Baguio”, for a one-month immersion experience. The people of this area are mainly of the B’laan tribe with some being of the Taga-Kaolo tribe. During this one-month period, I had a lot of nice experiences with the people of the area and it taught me more about what it means to be a missionary. I would like to share with you a few of these experiences.

While there, I met Fr. Samson, a PME Father, who started the mission in “Little Baguio”. As the years pass by, I can say that he is now harvesting the fruits of what he planted many years before. As a result of his efforts, there are now many different projects designed to meet the needs of the local people. Among these projects are clinics for the health of the people, small schools to meet some of the basic educational needs and other projects designed to help the livelihood through which some of the basic needs of the people are met. Fr. Samson allowed me to go to some of the Barangays in Little Baguio in order to give me an experience of what life is like as a missionary.

My first experience was to Brgy. Lanulan, where I stayed for one week. To get to this place, I needed to travel for 4 hours on foot. I passed through a mountainous area, crossed 2 rivers, and climbed numerous slopes with many stones along the path. It was fulfilling for me to have successfully overcome all these obstacles and to arrive at the place. The people I encountered were welcoming and hospitable. They had even prepared lunch for me.



During the day, they went about their daily tasks in the field where I joined them. In the afternoon, I visited some families where I had time to talk with them and to listen to their life stories and their lived experiences of the area. One particular family member shared with me that, if they did not work they would have difficulty obtaining food. I relate to this in the statement “Ora et Labora”, which means that you need to work in order to eat. Despite having a difficult life, they are happy and content with what they have. The lack of electricity, gadgets or appliances are not hindrances for them to be happy. One father of a family told me “...we are happy and content in our situation because we live peacefully and we are also thanking God for how he helps us in our daily living...” They are thankful for the abundant harvest they get after 3 or 4 months of farming.

These are only a few of my experiences from the period I was in Little Baguio. Having had this experience, I can say that my eyes were opened to what the word MISSION really means. It is to be with people and to help them recognize how God works in them irrespective of the religion they have. It does not matter whether they are Catholic, “Kristohanon” or Moslem. The main point is for people to help each other, for people to work hand-in-hand, so that they will have a peaceful and happy life.

Hilario (Larry ) T. Villaver Jr.

Rwandan Proverb: *Imana iraguha, ntimugura: God gives to you, do not haggle with him:*  
**Meaning: Everything is grace; God’s free gift is unconditional**



On 23 March 2014, I went with my fellow candidate, Larry, to Little Baguio, a mountain barangay of Malita in Davao Occidental for our one-month exposure. We lived in the mission of the PME fathers. I liked Little Baguio because the place is beautiful and the weather is cold. I appreciated the beauty of nature, where the mountains are still green, there are still plenty of trees, the rivers are clear and, most of all, there is no pollution.

Our first activity was a one-week community exposure where I was assigned to Malbag, one of the sittio of Little Baguio. It was not easy to go there because we walked 5-6 hours, climbing mountains, passing through many rivers and, most of all, the fear of being bitten by snakes. When we arrived, we found the people of Malbag to be simple and nice. Most of them are farmers growing abaka, corn and other root crops. We were not given any particular activity to do, but had to decide for ourselves what kind of activity we wanted to get involved in. I decided to take time to visit the families around, especially on the top of the mountain, in order to see their lived situation.



Our second activity was a family exposure. I was assigned to Caluga of the sittio in a barangay near Little Baguio where I lived with the family of Kuya Alfonso Tanging. He has five children and they live very simply. They are farmers growing abaka and corn as their main source of income. I stayed in their house for one week, eating, working with them and helping them in their normal daily activities. It was with them where I learned to weave abaka and how to get the thread of abaka. In addition, I also visited their neighbour on the other side of the mountain. Climbing up and down the mountain was tiring, but I enjoyed it.

In general, I found my experience in Little Baguio to be very memorable, not only because of the place, but also because it helped me to better understand the meaning of what missionary life is all about. I am now better able to understand the happiness and the joy in the mission with people.

Phil Xandry Aparece



**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
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**To find out more about who we are and our mission, contact our International website:**

**How you can help us:**

Above all, please help us with your prayers for vocations and for the  
Missionary in Africa.

You can spread this « News Letter » through e-mail.

You can help us in the formation of our seminarian by sending a financial  
contribution by check payable to « Missionaries of Africa ».

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE MISSION INTENTIONS  
OF POPE FRANCIS FOR THE COMING MONTHS**

SEPTEMBER: That Christians inspired by the Word of God, may serve the  
poor and suffering

OCTOBER: That World Mission Day may rekindle in every believer zeal  
for carrying the Gospel into all the world.

NOVEMBER: That young seminarians and religious may have wise and  
well-formed mentors.

DECEMBER: That parents may be true evangelizers, passing on to their  
Children the precious gift of faith.

**PLEASE PRAY FOR THE DECEASED MEMBERS  
OF THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA AROUND THE WORLD**



Fr. Robert Hamert from France  
at the age of 88  
(64 years of Missionary Life)



Br. Ludwig (Suso) Wille from Germany  
At the age of 86  
(65 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Gaetan Poulin from Canada  
at the age of 79  
(54 years of Missionary Life)



Br. Gerhard Weffers from Germany  
at the age of 90  
(61 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Jean Deffontaine from Belgium  
at the age of 92  
(69 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Silvio Lazzarato from Italy  
at the age of 87  
(63 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Paul De Buck from Belgium  
At the age of 86  
(61 Years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Michel Tramblais from France  
At the age of 71  
(46 Year of Missionary Life)



Fr. Jean Baranton from France  
At the age of 90  
(63 Years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Lawrence Croussette from Canada  
At the age of 82  
(57 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Emilio Galindo Aguilar from Spain  
At the age of 87  
(62 Years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Oskar Genatowski from Germany  
At the age of 78  
(57 Years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Luigi Plebani from Italy  
At the age of 73  
(46 Years of Missionary Life)





## MISSIONARIES ON THE MOVE



Fr. Thomas Schwiedessen, from Germany, successfully completed his studies in Manila. After many years in the Philippines he has now returned to Germany to visit his family and has now arrived in his new place of appointment in Ejisu, Ghana, West Africa where he will be part of our formation team. We thank Thomas for his years of dedicated service to the project of the Missionaries of Africa in the Philippines.

Fr. John Itaru, from Tanzania has been a member of our community in Cebu for a number of years while completing a course of studies at San Carlos University in Cebu. He has now completed his studies and will leave our community at the end of September. He is appointed to our community in Lusaka, Zambia. We thank John for his contribution to our local community and to the wider community.

Br. Lito Doguiles, from the Philippines, has been appointed to our formation community in Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa, where he will follow a course of studies leading to priesthood in our Society.

Christopher Rabelas, a candidate with the Missionaries of Africa from the Philippines, has completed his two-year pastoral experience in Tanzania, East Africa, has been appointed to our formation community in Nairobi, Kenya, to begin his four-year Theology program.

Alvin Escabusa a Filipino candidate with the Missionaries of Africa, has successfully completed his Spiritual Year in Kasama, Zambia, and has been appointed to Mozambique to begin his two-year pastoral experience.

### ***Mary, our Lady of Africa!***

*Remember the peoples and nations of Africa!*

*You were present with the Apostles*

*at the beginning of the Church.*

*Be with the apostles of today!*

*May they be faithful witnesses of the Good News of Jesus Christ your Son.*

*Help us to know and love Jesus, to follow him faithfully,*

*to learn to act justly and to love tenderly.*

### ***Mary, our Lady of Africa!***

*May the Spirit of God who overshadowed you to become mother of God*

*renew the face of the earth!*

*Our Lady of Africa pray for us!*

### **Missionaries of Africa**

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OUR LADY QUEEN OF AFRICA  
PRAY FOR US



STAY TUNED FOR THE NEXT EDITION OF  
OUR NEWSLETTER WITH MORE NEWS  
ABOUT THE  
MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA IN THE  
PHILIPPINES AND BEYOND.

In the mean time, why not join us on our International website:

*[mafrome.org](http://mafrome.org)*

Where you will find more about our history, our formation, Africa  
and many other aspects of our life.