



# AFRICA CALLING

## NEWSLETTER OF THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA IN THE PHILIPPINES



4/2014

The end of every year is a time when we can look back at what has been and to look forward to what the future holds. It is a time to look at challenges faced and achievements made. It is a time to give thanks!

During the course of this year, our community in Cebu has undergone changes of personnel. We experienced the departures of Fr. Emmanuel for our Spiritual Year in Burkina Faso, Fr. Thomas for his new appointment in Ghana and Fr. John, who was in the Philippines studying, to his new home in Zambia. We saw the arrival of Fr. Paul from Canada, who came to replace Fr. Emmanuel as rector of our formation centre in Cebu. Three members of our community remained to provide stability: Fr. Coro, Fr. Loloy and Fr. Charlie. And, of course, we have our two candidates, Larry and Xandry, who complete our community and are now in their second year of formation. This is our new community as we head into the New Year 2015. Together, we look forward with hope.

One of the greatest challenges we, and the people of the Philippines, faced in 2014 was the devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda that hit parts of the Philippines last year in November. One year later, much work remains to be done. As Missionaries of Africa, we were blessed to have so many people from different corners of the world respond to our call to provide assistance. We thank all who have helped us in one way or another to build houses and to play a role in reaching out to some of the victims in order that they can begin to rebuild their shattered lives. This was a glimmer of hope in an extremely difficult situation.

We take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you who reads our newsletter and who, in one way or another, supports us in our mission here in the Philippines. Through this newsletter, we hope to continue to be able to provide you with news and information concerning our project here in the Philippines as well as the work of the Missionaries of Africa in Africa and beyond. The on-going contact back and forth with those who read this newsletter is an encouragement for us and for this we thank you.

What we have been able to achieve here over the past 12 months, we could not have done without your continued support. For supporting us spiritually with your prayers, we say *Thank You*. For your financial support for our projects and our formation programme, we say *Merci Beaucoup*. For your desire to know more about the Missionaries of Africa and our

work we say *Salamat Kaayo!*

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will already have entered the Season of Advent. Advent is a period of preparation leading us to the great Solemnity of Christmas, an event that reminds us of a day when God came to dwell in our midst. Jesus is our Emmanuel—God with us. Truly God has been with us during the course of this year. We pray that He will continue to be our guiding star as we head into a New Year.

May the Lord bless each of you and your families.

## SIGNS OF HOPE



*Fr. Armand Galay is a Missionaries of Africa priest from the Philippines. He is currently living in our community in Toronto, Canada from where he writes to share some of his experiences in his ministry.*

It was cold and windy as I was walking through the woods of Toronto High Park this afternoon. While the autumn wind was blowing through trees, leaves were falling by the thousands. The trees have to shed all its leaves in the fall so as to bear the weight of the snow and withstand the freezing rain winter might bring. Isn't it amazing how nature teaches us to rid ourselves of anything that prevents us to go forward and live? It's hard to fly when something is weighing us down.

Our mission in Canada is definitely a new venture for me after seven years of missionary work in Burundi, Africa. Since September 2013, I've been appointed to promote vocations for the Missionaries of Africa, in Toronto, Ontario.

Vocation to priesthood and religious life in Canada, or North America in general, has become a rarity for decades. Priests, religious sisters and brothers are ageing and retiring in large numbers. If I perceived it as a depressing reality, it could surely weigh me down and prevent me from dreaming for at least a different tomorrow. Our God is a God of surprises. So, instead, I took it as a challenge or even seized it as an opportunity to simply start anew. The renewed commitment of our Province to revive vocation promotion in this part of the globe did certainly give me a





boost. Pretty optimistic, our community in Toronto even wondered whether we could send our candidates to Cebu if we get one!

I work closely with Toronto Area Vocation Directors Association (TAVDA) when it comes to vocation work. (photo1) To reach out to young people, we organize vocation fairs at schools for High School students, and we facilitate retreats and discernment workshops for busy University students and young professionals. (photo2) Recently, some university students and young professionals, desiring to know more about religious and missionary vocations, have come out with the idea of “Vocation speed-dating” - a pretty interesting concept for vocation promotion!

Two of the most encouraging and uplifting events that I’ve experienced, happened this summer 2014. The first was in a “Family Encounter Weekend” workshop, organized by “Bukas Loob Sa Dios (BLD-Toronto), in which I was invited to give a series of talks, celebrate masses and animate various activities for eighteen participating families. After the closing Mass, an eight year-old boy came to me and said: **“Father, I really liked your vocation story. I want to be like you. And I want to be a priest too!”** Wasn’t it a sign from God telling us not to lose hope? The second one was at the Youth Camp (photo3) where I was one of the priest animators. Our day started at six, by praise and worship, and we ended the night by adoration or Taizé prayer until midnight! These one hundred and fifty young people were thirsting for God, longing to know him more, but ever ready to stand up and witness to their faith in this ever more challenging world of today.

While the long nights and cold air of winter is coming pretty soon here in Canada, I can sense the exact opposite happening in our Catholic Church. “The Joy of the Gospel”, Pope Francis’ Apostolic exhortation, and the recently concluded first part of the Synod on the Family are bringing warmth and light, mercy and hope to the *fringes of humanity*.

Inspired by our Pope, I decided to actively take part in the work for healing and reconciliation of hurting marriages through the “Retrouvaille” process, a lifeline for married couples. As the presenting couples and I gave our talks, shared our experiences and provided communication tools, we witnessed, in the middle of the process, that miracles were happening in the lives and relationship of these



hurting couples. Even those who were already separated decided to forgive, love and with firm resolve, try to make their marriages work again. Imagine the peace and joy that this healing can give to the whole family, the children in particular, and to the world.

These are signs of hope happening here and now. In the field of vocation, so long as we faithfully go forth, each day and in every occasion, to propose to the young people the richness and beauty of a life dedicated to serving, healing and loving every person, I believe miracles can happen here too.

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Fr. Armand Galay, M.Afr.



# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA CANDIDATES FROM THE PHILIPPINES CURRENTLY IN FORMATION



Alvin Escabusa from Marikina,  
Manila

First Year  
Pastoral Experience



Hilario Villaver Jr. from Davao  
City

Second Year  
Philosophy in Cebu



Clayb Caputolan from Ozamis,  
Cebu

Second Year  
Theology in  
Nairobi, Kenya



Christopher Rabelas from Rizal  
Province

First Year Theology in Nai-  
robi, Kenya



Br. Lito Doguiles from Lyete

Currently studying for priest-  
hood in Nairobi Kenya



Xandry Aparece from Davao  
City

Second Year  
Philosophy in Cebu

# PROMOTING VOCATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

*Fr. Luisito Poe and Fr. Coro Malugao are the members of our community chiefly involved in vocation animation in the Philippines. They write to express some of their experiences in this area.*

## *Vocation Promotion*

It is always a challenge to promote vocation in line with the charism of our congregation. Ways and means have been ventured, always with the view that more candidates will be attracted to our way of life. Indeed, a good number of students have passed through our First Cycle house in Cebu and have lived with us for different spans of time; however, for different reasons, most of them were unable to proceed to the next phase or left at different stages of our formation process. We need to be thankful for those who persevered and are now full members of the Society although they are in the minority.

## *The Act of Giving Oneself*

The vocation promoters have been doing their best to attract more vocations for the Missionaries of Africa here in the Philippines. It is not an easy task, but we have reasons to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to our predecessors, who worked hard for sharing part of their missionary journey by allocating time and exerting a lot of effort for this kind of ministry. They have done marvelous work in terms of vocation animation as well as making our congregation better known in the Philippines.

## *Are there changes in our approach?*

There was a time when our confreres in charge of vocation promotion were very much involved in school chaplaincy and devoted most of their time animating and giving Spiritual inputs to members of the campus ministry. In addition, vocation clubs were organized on some islands. Many of these clubs had active members that, even in the absence of vocation promoters, did their best to organize some activities to strengthen the bonding of members. Posting and distribution of leaflets has been done constantly in different schools and parishes. There is regular and active participation in the Directors of Vocation Promoters group including the "Vocation Jamboree", where a large number of young people participate hoping to be enlightened in choosing their vocation in life. While there are not many changes in our current approach, we see a need to be more focused on some of these important ways of doing vocation promotion.

Nowadays, we are working on opening more vocation clubs. One such club has been recently opened in Bohol, while the one in Calinan, Davao is still active. We plan to open others on the neighbouring islands. We still continue to visit schools and parishes as a way of encountering young people who may be interested in joining us.

Our vocation clubs are exclusively for the boys. Members of these clubs are high school students, college students and young professionals. During our monthly encounters, we help them to listen and to answer the call of the Lord in their lives. We organize activities aimed at helping them to grow psychologically and spiritually. We have prayer together for praising the Lord. We share about vocation and different Biblical texts. We watch films about saints or other films that can help them to think of moral values. There is also a report from each member of the club and each member has to do research and report on any country in Africa. At the end of each encounter, we have a Eucharistic Celebration. This is a way of promoting vocation, but, at the same time, it is also an apostolate to help these young people better understand where God is calling them in life: married life, priesthood, brotherhood or single blessedness. The important thing is that they grow and become faithful to the Lord.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA  
IN THE PHILIPPINES WRITE TO:**

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**To find our more about who we are and our mission,  
log on to our international website:**

**mafrome.org**

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



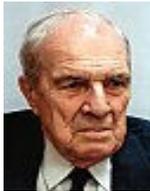
Fr. Gonzalo Estremera from Spain at the age of 80.  
(40 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Herve Descours from France at the age of 80.  
(67 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Francois Laflamme from Canada at the age of 87  
(60 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Alphonse Daigneault from Canada at the age of 91  
(63 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Paul Bourgeois from Belgium at the age of 94.  
(70 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Roger Rames from France at the age of 93.  
(72 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Antoon Janssens from Belgium at the age of 100.  
(75 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Pierre Simson from France at the age of 89.  
(64 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Henri Ramart from France at the age of 90.  
(66 years of Missionary Life)



Fr. Baudoin Waterkeyn from Belgium at the age of 83.  
(58 years of Missionary Life)

## NOTICE OF DEATH

We ask your prayers for the repose of the soul of Hilario Villaver Sr., the father of our candidate, Hilario Villaver Jr. who is in his second year at our formation centre in Cebu. Hilario Villaver Sr. died during the evening of 28 November 2014 at a hospital in Davao following a long period of illness. For a little over a week prior to his death, he was being treated in the ICU unit of the hospital in Davao. May his soul rest in peace.

We also pray for the Villaver family who are mourning at this time that they may be comforted and sustained by their faith.

### How you can help us:

Above all, please help us with your prayers for vocations and for our missionaries in Africa and in our communities throughout the world.

You can also share this « News Letter » with others you feel would like to know more about us and our work.

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

*The Missionaries of Africa Community  
in Cebu, Philippines*

*Wish you and your family a*

*Blessed Christmas  
and a  
Blessed New Year 2015*