



NIP **NEWSLETTER**

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**BRIEFINGS FROM THE 2019 SMA
NIGERIA PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY**

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COLLABORATION SMA/OLA



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MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT OF THE PROVINCE

MISSION

"The Nigeria Province members coming from different nations and cultures are united in fraternal love with the aim of being at the service of the Gospel, and witnessing to the Father's love for all peoples, especially the most abandoned, by promoting the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, in the spirit of our Founder, Bishop Melchior de Marion Brésillac."

VISION

"We envision a Unit where our primary concern is the promotion of the values of simplicity, hospitality, charity, honesty, mutual support and respect among members, and among the people with whom we work. A Unit where leaders and members collaborate and are united in genuine dialogue for the advancement of the mission of God entrusted to the Church. A Unit dedicated to primary evangelisation as well as enhancing the experience of newness of the Gospel in areas where the Church is already established; working to promote the culture of Mercy and Love. A Unit which invests in its members through specialised training in areas of interest, one where every member is valued and empowered to give of their best for the mission."



Rev. Fr. Joseph Nomhwange, SMA
Councillor



Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Zinsu, SMA
Provincial Superior



Rev. Fr. Claude Nikpi, SMA
Councillor



Rev. Fr. Matthew Bassah, SMA
Vice-Superior

PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR'S CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR MESSAGE

"Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his faithful love endures forever." Psalm 107:1.

As this year 2019 comes to an end, we all have reasons to give thanks to the Lord who is the Giver and Sustainer of our lives. While we have reasons for individual thanksgiving, we also have reasons to be grateful to God as the SMA family. This year has gone down in the annals of history, when the long-awaited realisation of the dream of a SMA Nigerian Province became a reality. This is indeed a big reason for us to be thankful to God. We acknowledge and are grateful to all who have contributed in any way to the achievement of this milestone. Our gratitude also to all our supporters who have always been there for us with their various forms of support.

As we look forward to the New Year 2020, we are conscious of the challenges that lie ahead. A change in status brings with it more responsibilities and demands more commitment. But together and with God by our side, we can be unstoppable. Therefore, let us unite, hand in hand, as we continue to spread the Good News of God's love which we celebrate in the birth of Christ at Christmas.

May the peace, joy and love that the Child Jesus brings to us at Christmas, abide with each one of us, with our families, in our communities and places of mission and in our country Nigeria.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR 2020



Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Zinsu, SMA
Provincial Superior



BRIEFINGS FROM THE 2019 SMA NIGERIA PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

The first Nigeria Provincial Assembly took place at the SMA house in Abuja from the 11th to the 21st of November 2019 with the theme “A Family faithful to its missionary charism in the changing and complex context of today.” The Assembly had 17 participants which comprised 2 Ex-Officio, 10 delegates and 5 invitees. We were also honoured by the presence of the SMA General Council from Rome, in the person of Fr. Francis Rosario SMA, the OLA Provincial Sr. Celestina Nevoh, OLA, the SMA Mission Support Group and the Bishop of Kontagora Vicariate, Bishop Bulus Dauwa Yohanna.

It was indeed an historical event set aside to look back at our past in an appreciative way, which helped us to understand the present realities and build on our strengths rather than let our weaknesses paralyse us as we look and plan ahead for the future. The method used to achieve all these objectives was referred to as 'appreciative discernment'. It is summarised under the heading of the 5 Ds – Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, and Deliver (Do it). Fr. Basil Soyoye, SMA was the facilitator. The high points of the Assembly's reflections were on Spirituality and lifestyle, Mission and Formation, Finance and leadership which are areas of our Mission and life as SMAs. The backdrop of the resolutions from these reflections was summarised as follows:

In our search for holiness we must focus on Christ as our model and this holiness is manifested in humility and our willingness to be close to the poor and most abandoned. In our work with the laity we are called to appreciate their giftedness and help them play a very active and inclusive role in the fulfillment of the missionary mandate amidst the changing realities of today. Hopefully, we shall grow as true missionaries, fully committed to spreading the message of Christ to the most abandoned.

This led to the transition process of the leadership team which took place on Tuesday the 19th of November 2019 and at the end of the voting process there emerged the new Provincial Superior, Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Zinsu, SMA. The following day, 20th of November, ushered in the election of the Vice-Superior and two Councillors for the Province: Fr. Matthew Bassah, SMA (Vice-Superior), Fr. Claude Nikpi, SMA (Councillor), and Fr. Joseph Nomhwange, SMA (Councillor). On the 21st of November, at the Holy Family Parish, Life Camp, Abuja, the newly-elected Provincial team members made their profession of faith in the presence of the General Councillor, SMA Fathers, MSG members, SMA Youth and the entire faithful of the parish.

The Assembly enjoyed a joyful, humorous, fraternal, amiable and spirit-filled atmosphere. We commend our newly-born Province into the hands of Our Lady of Lourdes, to present our Province at the feet of Jesus Christ, who is our model and source of strength.



Front: L-R: Frs. Emokhare, Rosario, Nikpi, Zinsu, Bassah, Nomhwange, Temuyi, Mayumba, Atolagbe.
Back: L-R: Frs. Imoniunu, Soyoye, Acheneje, Romanus, Ebute, Nwachukwu, Donthika, Malong.

Fr. Emmanuel Imoniunu, SMA

REACTION TO THE FIRST NIGERIAN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY (NPA)

My experience of the NPA: A truly SMA Assembly with Naija flavours

As I left Abuja (on the 25th November 2019) going back to Accra after our first historical Nigerian Provincial Assembly, a few things lingered joyfully in my mind.

First of all, as many participants and invitees also expressed, there is so much hope and optimism in the Nigerian Province. And this is for very good and right reasons, considering our potential. While other countries had the elevation as Provinces “thrust upon them.” the SMA Nigerian story is somewhat different. We can all recall that even before and especially around the General Assembly of 2007 there were both formal and informal requests from some Nigerian confrères for the then Nigeria SMA Region (s) to be given some level of autonomy (creation of a District) within the former structures of the Society. The desire and quest for that self-governance had nothing to do with pride or arrogance but was the result of a sense of self-confidence and a pace setting spirit which characterise the average Nigerian around the globe. Perhaps, this is also one of Nigeria's gifts to the SMA as missionaries. When we gathered in Abuja for the Assembly, this optimism was visibly seen in the seriousness given to the discussions, in the drafting of the documents, in the election process and in the general level of maturity.

Secondly, there was a lot of generosity during the Assembly: confrères came fully prepared and were ready to spend extra hours working on documents. Many others were working often late into the night, not to mention the sacrifices of our dear hosts (confrères, parishioners and Mission Support Group (MSG) members) who ensured we had everything provided and even more. Una well don jare! It was really a touching experience. Indeed, it is not surprising that generosity is almost synonymous with our name and nature. This was also very much in evidence during the Assembly. ■ continued on page 5



SHORT PROFILES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE PROVINCIAL TEAM

"It is ironic to note that for every work well done, for every selfless service more and higher service is required."

Fr. Emmanuel Imoniunu SMA

REV. FR. EMMANUEL ZINSU, SMA (PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR)

Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Zinsu was born on 31st December, 1977 in Badagry, Lagos State. He began his early education in Ajara, Badagry. In 1999, his initial formation with the SMA was set rolling in the Preparatory House in Kagoro, Kaduna State. This was followed by four years study of Philosophy in Ss. Peter and Paul Major Seminary, Bodija, Ibadan from 1999 to 2003. He then proceeded to the SMA International Spiritual Centre, (ISY) Calavi, Bénin Republic from the year 2003 to 2004. A year of pastoral experience (referred to as 'Stage') took place in Mission Catholique, Saoudè, Togo from 2004 to 2005. During the final year of his theological studies in the Institut Catholique Missionnaire d'Abidjan (ICMA) from 2005 to 2008 he was ordained a deacon and he was appointed to work in Holy Family SMA Parish, Gaa-Akanbi, Ilorin and in St. Patrick's SMA Parish, Cable Point, Asaba from 2008 to 2009. He was ordained a priest at St. Joseph's SMA Parish, Gowon Estate, Lagos on the 20th June, 2009 by His Eminence, Cardinal Anthony Olubunmi Okogie, SMA.



After his ordination he has served in various capacities:

1. Paroisse Notre Dame du Mont Carmel, Grabo, Diocese of San Pedro, Côte d'Ivoire – 2009 to 2012.
2. Secretary / Bursar of SMA Bight of Bénin District-in-Formation – 2012 to 2016.
3. Secretary / Bursar of SMA Nigeria District-in-Formation – 2016 to 2017.
4. Priest-in-charge at St. Joseph's Parish, K-Vom, Jos – February to August, 2018.
5. Diocese of Salut Sainte Marie, Ontario, Canada – October, 2018 to November, 2019.

On 19th November, 2019 he was elected at the first Nigerian Provincial Assembly as the first Provincial Superior of the SMA Nigerian Province.

In a few brief remarks immediately after he had accepted the verdict of the delegates Fr. Emmanuel admitted: "I feel greatly honoured, humbled and unworthy to have been called to serve the Society and the mission in this capacity".

REV. FR. MATTHEW BASSAH SHINKUT, SMA (VICE-PROVINCIAL)

Rev. Fr. Matthew Bassah Shinkut was born in Kaduna on 3rd September, 1980. He was admitted to begin his initial formation in Kagoro, 2002. From there he proceeded to study Philosophy at the Major Seminary of Ss. Peter and Paul which is affiliated to the University of Ibadan (2002-2006). He was later sent to Calavi, Bénin Republic for the SMA Spiritual Year from 2006 to 2007. This opened the way for a unique year of 'Stage' at the Parish of Mount Carmel Grabo, Diocese of San Pedro from 2007- -2008. He was ordained a Deacon on completion of his theological studies (2008-2012) in Nairobi, Kenya, leading him to his priestly ordination on 12th May, 2012.



1. After his ordination his first appointment was to Paroisse Christ Roi (Christ the King), Doba, San Pedro Diocese, Ivory Coast as Associate Priest from 2012 to 2013.
2. He was later appointed to St. Louis de Téguéré, Archdiocese of Korhogo, Ivory Coast as Parish Priest from 2013 to 2014.
3. He returned to Nigeria after three years and worked as Vocations Director and Promoter in Nigeria North from 2014 to 2016.
4. Currently, he has been serving as the Parish Priest of St. Peter's parish, Sabon Tasha, Kaduna from 2016 till today.

Rev. Fr. Matthew is the Vice Provincial Superior of the Nigerian Province. According to him and I quote: "I feel privileged to be elected as Vice-Provincial Superior. More than that, I am fully aware that being Vice-Provincial of a reputable Society like the SMA comes with a huge responsibility. I feel honoured and I pray that God gives me the grace to serve the Nigeria SMA Province to the best of my ability".

REV. FR. CLAUDE NIKPI, SMA (COUNCILLOR)

Rev Fr. Claude Nikpi is from Côte d'Ivoire. He was born on the 25th of June 1979. He had his philosophical studies in Anyama, Côte d'Ivoire (1998 - 2000) and in 2000-2001 he proceeded to SMA International Spiritual Centre, (ISY), Calavi, Bénin Republic (2000 -2001). He was later sent to Kontagora Prefecture for a year's pastoral experience called Stage from 2001 -2002 and at the end of this pastoral experience he continued for his theological studies in Saints Peter and Paul Major Seminary, Bodija (2002 – 2005) and upon receiving his Permanent Oath in 2005, he was ordained on the 15th of July 2006 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. As a committed missionary he has been entrusted with various responsibilities since his ordination.



1. Kagoro, Kaduna State: 2006 - 2007
2. Kano: 2007
3. Jos: 2007 – 2008
4. Kaduna: 2008 – 2010
5. Guffanti, Kontagora: 2010- 2013
6. Further studies: USA: 2013- 2016
7. Benin City, Edo State: Parish Priest at St. Andrew's SMA Parish, Ugbighoko: 2016 till date.



Reflections on his election as a member of the Nigeria SMA Provincial Team.

I feel humbled and grateful for being chosen to help the Provincial Superior in the administration of the new Province of Nigeria. It is also a challenge to me to help realise the dreams of the new Province and help each member and associate fulfill his missionary vocation in the changing context of the world today. The task I have as well as the task of the Provincial Superior and of the other members of the Council is not an easy one; thus, I pray every day to the One who called us and who strengthens us to send down upon us his wisdom and increase in us our faith in him.

We also rely on the prayer, honesty and readiness of each member of the Province to collaborate with the Superior and his Council for a smooth and happy execution of our task. It is only in faith, united in Christ like love with the spirit of solicitousness, that we can move our Province forward for the better and attain the desired heights. In fact the methodology used for our various Assemblies including the General Assembly, reminds us that the growth and good of the Province is not just the responsibility of the Superior and his Council but the responsibility of each and every member. With men and women, we have an opportunity to enter into the plan of God. Thus I invite all members and associates to a greater dedication and collaboration in the journey just begun.

With God everything is possible, Archangel Gabriel said to Mary and to us today, we have, therefore, no fear even if we should walk in the valley of darkness.

May God bless our new Province, may He bless the Superior and his Council. May Mary, our Mother of Nigeria intercede for us. PEACE.

REV. FR. JOSEPH TILE NOMHWANGE, SMA (COUNCILLOR)

Though Rev. Fr. Joseph is from Benue State he was born in Kaduna on the 29th of March, 1974. On completion of his Preparatory programme with the SMA in Kagoro, Kaduna State he proceeded to Ss. Peter & Paul Major Seminary, Ibadan where he graduated with a B.A. degree in Philosophy.. In 2002-2004, he proceeded to the SMA international Spiritual Year (ISY) house in the Republic of Bénin and on completion he was sent to Togo for 'Stage' in 2003-2004. He was later sent to study theology at Tangaza College, Nairobi from 2004-2008. There he attained a B.Th. in theology and a Diploma in Mission. Joseph was ordained by Rt. Rev. John Moore, SMA, at Gboko, Benue State on the 14th of June 2008. It is interesting to note that he also has a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (Major) in Missiology from the Pontifical and Royal University of St. Thomas (Divine Word Institute of Mission Studies, Tagaytay City, Philippines).



Since then he has worked in the following missions

1. SMA REGION OF TOGO (TCHEBEBE PARISH, DIOCESE OF SOKODE, TOGO) 1st October 2008
2. SPIRITUAL YEAR, SILANG CAVITE, PHILIPPINES 26th September 2011 – October 2015
3. PREPARATORY PROGRAMME, TANKOSI, BENIN REPUBLIC 1st October 2015- 20th March 2017.
4. Episcopal Secretary for Mission, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja 28th March 2017.
5. Director, Mission and Dialogue, Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria 1st January till date.

According to Fr. Joseph "I see my election as Councillor, and thus, a part of the Provincial Leadership of the SMA in Nigeria, as a privilege to serve despite my unworthiness. As a team, under the leadership of our new Provincial Superior, we count on the prayers, support and cooperation of all members to continue to build a family that:

- a. Helps us to be more aware of our common missionary vocation in the SMA.
- b. In which all feel at home, helping one another to grow.
- c. And that as a Society, we will continue to play our role in keeping the missionary heartbeat of the Church alive in Africa and beyond.

REACTION TO THE FIRST NIGERIAN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY (NPA) ■ continued from page 3

Thirdly, whether in formal discussions or in informal conversations over some mortuary-cold bottles of several tasteful liquids, I had a feeling that we are all realising the old sagely axiom: UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL. Indeed, unity is always a work in progress and our vigilance against any intrusive elements that can divide us will determine how far we can grow. Certainly, it is not yet uhuru but I left Abuja feeling that we are on the right track for now.

Finally, even though we had gathered for serious business in Abuja, during break times one got the impression of a night of a thousand laughs being organised (forgive my exaggeration). There was a lot of humour, laughter and interaction. Even at times when things seem hard and tense, humour has a way of helping us to cool off. Perhaps the nature of our Society and SMA has taught us this. The atmosphere in general, especially outside the Assembly meeting hall, was humorous and friendly.

I thank God and all confrères, friends and associates for being part of this humble beginning. May the nascent Province grow for the glory of God.

Malong Jonathan Kangpan, now on mission in Ghana.

NEWS ON VOCATIONS AND PROMOTION

“For each one of us, there is only one thing necessary: to fulfill our own destiny, according to God's will, to be what God wants us to be” (Thomas Merton).

VOCATION

It would not be charitable to conclude that the economic situation of the country has a great influence on the constant increase of intelligent and young men making the choice of embracing the missionary priesthood today. Somehow I believe God tries to create a kind of equilibrium, as we experience a decrease in vocations to the priesthood in Europe, America and around Asia. Yet with the limited number for admission every year the process of discernment to get to understand, though not a hundred per cent, the motivation and passion of these young men become strenuous.

In the course of 2019 we received approximately 760 applications for the missionary priesthood and they all went through the process whereby candidates are accepted into the SMA Preparatory Programme in Kagoro. This process leading to possible acceptance, takes approximately one year from October when the first applications are attended to, to September when acceptance is given.

For Nigeria North we have Fr. Samson Ebute, SMA and for the South we have Fr. Emmanuel Imoniunu. We pray and ask God to bless them with the spirit of discernment as they accompany these young men through the process of initial discernment and selection.

PROMOTION

“If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones.” Luke 16:10. The same is true about our confrères who have been faithfully committed in their little ways to their respective missions. In a special way we celebrate Rev. Frs. Christopher Ayodeji Oshalaiye, SMA (Notre Dame de Lourdes Bougou, Diocèse de Djougou, Bénin Republic) and Amgbwea Istifanus Afala (Nikki, Bénin Republic) who were raised to the position of Parish Priests in the Republic of Bénin. Always have it at the back of your mind that the NP is with you all the way. We promise you our constant prayers and support.

PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS:

Life Camp, Abuja 2019!!! On 6 July, 2019 we experienced the first ordination as a young Province by His Eminence John Cardinal Onaiyekan of the Archdiocese of Abuja as the ordaining Prelate. Four young priests, Frs. Jerome Ogbeneovo Aduzoka, Yakubu Salisu Sabo, Abel Yashim and Jeremiah Bitiong Augustine, willingly gave themselves completely for the mission and love of God's people, especially the most abandoned. They were appointed to Ghana, Angola, Zambia and Tanzania respectively.



L-R: Frs Abel Yashim, Jerome Aduzoka, Cardinal Onaiyekan, Yakubu Sabo and Jeremiah Augustine

FORTHCOMING ORDINATIONS:

Deacons were also ordained in Côte d'Ivoire this year and by God's grace this new Provincial Team will be blessed with her first ordination of three young SMA missionaries full of zeal, Revs. Tsereku Samuel Sunday Sesugh, Cletus Amos and Gonap Kishak Josiah. We commend them to Christ the Good shepherd.

STATISTICS OF THE NIGERIAN PROVINCE

Priests	57
Deacons	3
Temporary Members	18
15 Theology students (Kenya 4, Nigeria 4, Côte d'Ivoire 7)	
3 on Stage « Pastoral Year »	
Students in Calavi	6
Philosophy Students (Ibadan)	37
Kagoro	11

STAGIAIRES WORKING IN NIGERIA

Bro. Sunil (India) Apapa
Bro. Hospice (Bénin Rep.) Asaba
Bro. Jean Claude (Congo) Bobi, Kontagora
Bro. Esperence (Bénin Rep.) Pisa, Kontagora

WITHDRAWAL

Fr. Elisée Attiobé Kano
Fr. Sebastien Akponan Akure

APPOINTMENTS

Names	Appointment
Fr. Tongshinen Damain	Superior of the Kagoro house
Fr. Romanus Onyekuru	Zambia
Fr. Henry Obiora	St. Thérèse of Child Jesus, Akure
Fr. Anthony Agbovi	St. Charles, Kano
Fr. Pascal Guddah (Ghana)	Kontagora

Formal Posting

studies at Du
Asaba
benin
zambia
Newly Ordained

AN EXPERIENCE OF MISSION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

Fr. Christopher Oshalaiye, SMA gives an account of his 5 years mission experience in the Republic of Bénin.

I must confess that it is a privilege being asked to share my experience on this platform. To be sincere, it is an experience filled with joy and challenges, yet I am certain that all things happen for a reason and that God is always in control no matter the situation.

Being sent to Bénin Republic for my first missionary experience as a priest was a moment filled with joy because I had already a little knowledge of the country. As God would have it, I was appointed to the exact parish where I had my 'stage' experience. My first experience was a learning and enriching one and I had the opportunity of working with Fr. Valentine Fadegnon, SMA who was my parish priest. I worked closely with the youths and other groups in the parish.

Here, the faith of the people was very well lived, very rich and they responded positively to church activities. At a point, as a team we were faced with the question - who are the most abandoned, bearing in mind the charism of the SMA? This question came up because the parish was situated in the town and had no secondary stations. However, with the creation of certain stations this question was resolved and in 2017, I was appointed to the diocese of Djougou.

In this new mission, I was the third priest and I had as my parish priest Fr. Marcos Delgado, SMA and Fr. Jean Claude, a diocesan priest. For some this might be quite surprising but I must reassure you all that it was indeed very enriching. Also, upon arrival, the bishop asked that I be in charge of the English-speaking community resident in the diocese.

The parish is blessed with 39 outstations of which the farthest from the parish is 49km, and present in this territory are the following languages; lokpa, kabaye, yom, fulfude, nago, ditamari, English, fon, lema and French. It is important to mention that the area where the parish is situated is a Muslim-populated area and the relationship between the two groups has been very friendly.

At a point in time when I thought the number of people present for Mass was very important, I was quite surprised to witness in this new parish that just about 10 – 15 people came for morning Mass which was a very different from the number in my former parish. God willing to help me understand better sent me to Niger Republic to help my brother priests during the break and my experience of numbers changed positively. I then realised that it is the faith of the people that matters most and as missionaries we are called to be faithful and not to be concerned only with numbers.

Still being faithful to the SMA charism and reading the signs of the times and the needs of the people in the village, the parish started a Catholic school (a nursery, primary and secondary) called Complexe Scolaire Catholique, Ecole Esperance de Bougou. This school is open to all, and for us here, it is also a means of evangelisation.

In the month of August, with the new assignment of Fr. Marcos Delgado, SMA, the Province then District of Benin/Niger entrusted me with responsibility as the parish priest. I must say it has not been an easy journey for the past three months being the only priest on ground. Notwithstanding, with the help of God, the collaboration of Tobias, the SMA seminarian on his pastoral experience and the various catechists of the different communities things are working out well despite the daily struggles and challenges.

CERTAIN CHALLENGES LINKED WITH MY MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE

1. The lack of respect on the part of the people for the pastoral programme, i.e, it is possible to drive for 35km to a particular community and meet nobody there. There are also situations where the pastoral programme had to be cancelled because it is a market day meaning going there on such days is a total waste of time because there will be nobody to welcome you. The same thing occurs also when it is time for the harvesting of crops.
2. The non-active participation of the people in the life of the Church, especially in the various societies.
3. Lack of funds, especially for the proper running of the school.
4. The constant visit of the Catholic faithful to the native doctors and other churches for quick solutions to their problems.
5. Lack of maintenance of the various chapels and the problem of old age in certain communities. The old ones, that is the older members, are dying and no new members are replacing them. In this regard, I must acknowledge that the Holy Spirit is very much active in the Church's work of evangelisation. There is this particular community where the catechist keeps on reminding us that the older ones are dying. However on one faith-filled day the Lord really showed us that He is not deaf to our cry. From nowhere a good number of children joined in the Eucharistic celebration. No one attracted them with candies, no one called them, no bell was rung, but the Lord brought them Himself).
6. The lack of means of transportation for our catechists means that some are forced to walk for 7kms before getting to their respective communities to share the Word of God with the people. At the end with my little experience, I am convinced that the Lord is ever watchful and will never abandon anyone who trusts in Him and always calls on Him. No matter how slow we might feel the mission is we must never forget the promise of the Lord to be with us till the end. I still know I have a lot to learn and a lot of experience still awaits me here and out there; so please always remember me and my parishioners in your daily prayers.



Fr. Christopher Oshalaiye, SMA working in Notre Dame de Lourdes Bougou, Diocese De Djougou, Benin Republic

By *Fr. Christopher Oshalaiye, SMA.*



SMA YOUTH MISSION STORY RURAL RUGGED: REACHING OUT

"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power towards good ends."

(Mary McLeod Bethune, an American Educator)

The SMA Youth this year embarked on a mission to the most abandoned in a community of Ibadan called the ABA ODON Community, Ayegun Oleyo Road, Odo Ona Elewe, Ibadan on Friday the 25th of October 2019 at 7am. The difficulty in getting to the location because of the bad road did not really pose any discouragement rather it spurred us on the more. On arrival we were faced with a little resistance by the chief of the community. Notwithstanding the aim of this outreach was to assist in our little way the aged and children with little or no means of livelihood. And this was achieved through Education, sensitising the community to be more responsible, more sensitive and to be more knowledgeable about their community and ultimately pay more attention to their health.



■ continued on page 10

Miss Janet and other SMA Youths offering free medical check up

163rd SMA ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE HOPES



Archbishop Felix Alaba Job, retired Archbishop of Ibadan, receiving offertory gifts during the dedication of the Obanikoro chapel

Nostalgia took centre stage at SMA House, Obanikoro, Lagos on the evening of Saturday, 14th December as some of our SMA supporters gathered for a double celebration the following day of 163 years of SMA history and the recent creation of the SMA Nigeria Province. We were blessed in being doubly honoured to have in our midst Archbishop Felix Alaba Job, retired Archbishop of Ibadan, and Monsignor Valentine Awoyemi, Chancellor of Ijebu-Ode diocese, who both regaled us at supper that evening with a steady stream of fascinating stories about their SMA connections. Over a period of two hours they opened wide many doors to the past and amazed us with their ability to recall in intimate detail the names of SMA personalities who had played influential roles in their lives as children and later as seminarians, priests and bishop. For them these were cherished recollections marked by familiarity and friendship.

We had originally planned our celebration to take place on Foundation Day, 8th December, but various archdiocesan celebrations persuaded us to defer our celebrations until the following Sunday 15th of December. The Sunday Mass was a wonderfully uplifting occasion. Thanks to the initiative of the Superior, Fr. Julius Temuyi, the hall in which we have been saying Mass for the past fifteen years has been refurbished, thanks to the generosity of our worshipping community and the SMA Mission Support Group of Lagos. The change in décor and lay out (with the addition of a tabernacle which Archbishop Job blessed) will encourage increasing numbers to join the community in the New Year and may eventually lead to us having a Community Mass on Sundays. Many of those attending our Anniversary Mass have been SMA benefactors for more than twenty years and we acknowledged their generosity by presenting them with a special award in recognition of their commitment and loyalty.

The compound was jam-packed with supporters who took shelter from the sun under canopies and they were all replenished with ample amounts of food and lively music. During the reception Msgr. Val spoke with obvious delight of his early years in St. Theresa's, Minor Seminary Oke-Are and his years as a young priest in Ijebu-Ode diocese in the company of several Irish SMAs, referring in the course of his talk to Frs. Tom Curran, Michael O'Kane, Tom Kearney, Paddy Barry and Martin O'Farrell with whom he associated as a young priest. With ease he also rhymed off the names of John Clancy (now 88 years old and residing in SMA House, Blackrock Road, Cork city), John Guilfoyle (died in 1976), John O'Hea, Fintan Daly and Frank McGovern (died in 1999) who had a major formative influence on his early days as young seminarian in St Theresa's Minor Seminary. On this occasion he also paid tribute to Frs. John O'Hea and Fintan Daly who are both active in Ibadan Archdiocese. Msgr. Val then presented the awards and paid tribute to the worthy recipients with encouraging words taken from the award plaques.

As the new SMA Nigeria Province takes off there are many positive and encouraging signs that the work begun 163 years ago in Lagos is now safe in local hands and the welcome accorded to our pioneer missionaries all those years in Lagos and throughout the Nigeria will not just be emulated but will be greatly enhanced by a new group of enthusiastic, mission-minded and talented young Nigerian priests who will preach the message not just in Nigeria but throughout the Continent of Africa where the Society of African Missions has laid roots in the recent past.

We are equally blessed in having such a committed group of enthusiastic SMA Mission Supporters and benefactors from many parts of the country whose prayerful and financial support in the future will guarantee that what many consider to be a glorious past will be surpassed by an even more rewarding and faith-filled future.

Fr. Peter McCawille, SMA. St. Stephen's Day, 26th December, 2019.



CELEBRATIONS OF BIRTHDAY

60th Birthday

Fr. Augustine Onwuzurike, SMA

50th Birthday

Fr. Christopher Emokhare, SMA

40th Birthday

Fr. Shola Atolagbe

Fr. Osbert Egbe

Fr. Claude Nikpi

SOME NOTABLE ACTIVITIES:

- * Founders Day **25th June**
- * Ordination of four Priests: **6th July 2019**
- * Mission Support Group (MSG) members make one week missionary Journey from Obanikoro, passing through Bénin Republic, Togo, Ghana to Côte d'Ivoire'.
The Extraordinary Month of Mission in collaboration with some dioceses.
- * Visit to Topo Island by the SMA Youths on Easter Monday
- * 25th Anniversary (Silver Jubilee) of Holy Family Parish Life Camp, Abuja - **3 November**
- * First Nigerian Province Provincial Assembly from the **11th - 21st of November, 2019**
- * Lunching for the New Kagoro House on the **7th December 2019**.
- * The Feast of the Immaculate Conception on **8th December** every year when we recall with great joy the day of our SMA Foundation. On this day 163 years ago the Founder of the Society of African Missions, Bishop Melchior de Marion Brésillac dedicated the new enterprise to Our Lady at the Shrine of our Lady of Fouvrière in Lyon, France, founding a

Missionary Society that was destined to work among the most abandoned in Africa and those of African origin.

* Blessing of the New Chapel in SMA House, Obanikoro / presentation of awards to long-serving MSG members during the End of the year Party on 15th December 2019.

* SMA Youth Camp (North /South) from 18th through to 22nd December 2019 at Kagoro and Bodija respectively.

NECROLOGY

12th of October 2017 (Rustenburg, South Africa) Pius Omokhagbo Afiabor, Edo State (Nigeria), aged 45.

28th March 2018 (Ibadan, Nigeria) Syvester Nwannedimma Ogbogu, Delta State (Nigeria), aged 45.

Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed. The celebration of God's mercies and love each year offers a special time to thank God for the life of the generous missionary service and the countless souls that they have touched. They will forever be remembered and honoured because we will hold them always in our hearts and prayers. As part of our long tradition, masses were organised in different places and times in honour of all souls, especially our SMA Fathers, OLA Sisters, Family members and friends at St. Teresa's Minor Seminary, Oke-Are cemetery by the formation team and students of Bodija.

KAGORO: Confrères from Kagoro, Kaduna and Jos in conjunction with the OLA sisters from Kaduna, Bauchi and Jos gathered at the cemetery in Kagoro to honour our deceased confrères and deceased Sisters and Brothers.

The Nigerian Province expresses her deepest sympathy with her members and supporters who lost a loved one during the year. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

COLLABORATION SMA/OLA

October 1st 2019 marked the extraordinary mission month that was called for by His Holiness, Pope Francis on Mission Sunday two years ago saying "For the Month of October 2019, I ask the whole Church to live an extraordinary time of missionary activities" with the theme "Baptised and Sent: the Church of Christ on mission in the world". The intention is to reawaken in the Church the awareness of the *Missio ad gentes* especially in this changing time, as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the apostolic letter *Maximum Illud* which was issued by his Holiness, Pope Benedict XV. This was a golden opportunity for us this year to retrace and relive our heritage of faith as a missionary Society especially in Nigeria, as confrères and our OLA sisters made sure that this was well celebrated by the local Church in style. And indeed Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Uromi, Asaba, Abuja, Kagoro Kaduna, Jos, Shendam, and Bauchi among others, experienced the enriching activities that took place at different times. Passing on the faith from one community to another community was symbolised by the candle and the bible.

It was a moment for so many to recall all these great missionaries whose achievements were written in the indelible ink of faith as they worked tirelessly to sow the seeds of the faith in extremely difficult and challenging conditions. Though some have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, we still have some around and still making a contribution in this changing and complex world. In a nutshell, these celebrations and amazing experiences should not be confined to 2019 alone, Confrères and OLA Sisters are encouraged to devise newer and more creative ways of bringing these celebration alive every year for the active participation of the people.



SMA/OLA Collaboration during this month helped us to reach out to God's people, helped us to counsel and guide those who came to us for help in any way during and after the Extraordinary Month of Mission (EMM) activities. And the success of EMM can be said to be tied to this collaboration and the living out of our common patrimony. Secondly, apart from the ordinations and professions of SMA priests and OLA Sisters it is abundantly clear that our uniqueness as a family from the same patrimony is felt during the SMA Youth Camp held in Kagoro and Bodija respectively from the 18th to the 22nd of December 2019 with the theme: 'Youth Development: Politics and Social Media'.

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES



The Provincial Superior Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Zinsu, SMA. His Council and the entire members of the Nigeria Province heartily rejoice with Most Rev. Ignatius A. Kaigama appointed as the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Abuja and Bishop Matthew Ishaya Audu as the Archbishop of Jos and the Metropolitan of Jos Ecclesiastical Province. May the name of the Lord be praised.

We also congratulate the recent appointments of Rev. Fr. Julius Yakubu Kundi for Kafanchan Diocese and Rev. Mons. Augustine Echema for Aba Diocese.



SMA YOUTH MISSION STORY RURAL RUGGED: REACHING OUT

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It was aimed at nurturing a culture of respect and care towards all members of the community among the students and to plant a seed of dream into the hearts of the children in the community.

The event featured activities like organising games for the children, a time for sharing on different professions to the children in order to enhance the interest of the kids, entertain and teach the children for a period of time. Also, medical checks and counselling were given to members of the community on the importance of their health and making consistent efforts to have checks frequently.

At the end, gifts were given to the children, parents and also the head master as a token of gratitude for allowing us visit their community and school.

In conclusion, we can say that we definitely learned how to be more humane and sensitive to the needs of others, most especially to those who can't sustain themselves. Another thing to mention is, after seeing and looking at the kids' current condition, being able to help and teach, and to also show love and support to the children, we can say it was definitely a privilege. Seeing the smiles on their faces really makes your day and makes you feel the joy of doing these little things. And on that note, we thank the SMA community for giving us such a platform to reach out to the most abandoned among the less privileged and to show love to others.

Miss Adeoti Rosemary

SMA Youth / Ibadan Zone.

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