

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

NEWSLETTER No. 33

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My dear Friends,

Greetings! I hope you are fine and that your missionary spirit is still growing! Recently, Pope Francis told the youths: ***“Be missionaries of God’s mercy, which always forgives us, always awaits us and loves us dearly.”***

Last Sunday, I had the occasion to put into practice what you read in the second part of Martin’s article (here on the right): I said Mass and preached for the Malawian community, in Chichewa, a language I rarely use since I left Malawi in 1984! But with the help of God’ Spirit, it went well and the people seemed to understand me!

Most of you, I guess, will soon be on holiday. I wish you a well deserved rest and also a useful time to commit yourself to help in your Parish. This is the mark of a true missionary!

This month there was a lot of correspondence and phone calls between me and some young people of Cape Town area: they got interested in the Missionaries of Africa after reading our adverts in the *Southern Cross*. So, very soon I will go to visit them in Cape Town, and will also meet other youth who might be interested. Please, keep this in your prayers!

Shortly before Christmas, there will be another advert in the *Southern Cross*. Be on the lookout and receive our best Christmas wishes! Wishing you a very good ADVENT!

**HAPPY
CHRISTMAS!**

On this Feast of Christ the King!

Fr. Michel.

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Missionary life and the fear of the unknown (Part 2)

As a missionary, someone who is called to go to the unknown, should I feel the fear of the unknown? For me my answer is yes: I should feel the fear of the unknown but that fear should not keep me away to face the unknown. I believe that the only way to deal with fear is to feel the fear and face it. To deny one of my feelings is to harm myself.

Missionaries like the Missionaries of Africa from time to time are called to leave their zone of security (Home areas or where they have been before for mission) and go to other new places, to make the unknown known. And yet, at any time they are asked to face other realities, this fear appears. It will be funny to hear that a missionary of Africa has refused to go somewhere for mission because he does not know the place, the language ... They feel the fear and face it.

Through my own experience, I have been in Ouagadougou (Burkina-Faso) for the first phase of my missionary Africa formation, in Kasama (Zambia) for the novitiate and now in South-Africa for stage (pastoral experience). For all the three steps I felt the fear of the unknown and I faced it. For the first phase I was not completely out of my security zone, for Zambia I was completely out of it either, but it was better because as a novice I did not have much to worry about the language and the culture of the locality. Now in RSA I am completely out of my security zone and I have to face the language and the culture of the locality. I had never heard that there is a language called Zulu till the day I got my appointment to RSA and yet this is what I am learning now. Because of fearing the unknown, the day I got my appointment I asked the novice master which language I am going to learn there. He told me that I am going to learn Zulu and, to make my fear worse, he said it is a language with clicks. I said in my mind “What the hell is that?” because I could not imagine that there is a language with clicks. When I arrived in RSA my first need was to hear someone speaking Zulu, just to know at least how it sounds like. And also I did not know that, beside Zulu, there are other languages with clicks. For me, whenever I heard a click in a speech, it was Zulu! I kept my ignorance till the day I went to visit my community of stage (Lebombo). There I found that the confreres there, are speaking Zulu. I asked for Zulu books just to have an idea before going to the teacher. Then I realized that a language with clicks is not necessary Zulu. I got more courage by meeting people who have been able to learn Zulu and I said I might be one of them after a few months. I should face Zulu seriously. I should feel the fear of the unknown and face the unknown because it is the only way to deal with it.

I remember that one day my father told me the story of a quail: A quail was caught by the snare of the hunter. Instead of trying to escape, it started panicking and just stayed in the snare praying to God saying “my savior, save me” and God answered “how can I save you if you just lay down like this!” The quail came back to its senses and tried to escape and yet the string of the snare was cut and it escaped. From that day, at anytime the quail is caught, it first tries to escape, to take action. By this I mean that the fear should not lead us to panic but it should push us to take action.

When I reached Assisi, where I am learning the language, the next day I went to class and the first lesson was “the clicks in Zulu language”. I wondered if the teacher had not heard about my fear of clicks! This is how I started my battle for Zulu and it is still on. Manje ngicabanga ukuthi ngizokhuluma isiZulu. Akulula kodwa ngiyazama. It is not an easy language but it is learnable. It just needs commitment and interest.

Missionaries, we are called to face the unknown and to make it known. We should feel the fear of the unknown but we should not fear the unknown. The only one way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to feel the fear of doing this thing and go out and do it anyway. **Feel the fear but do not allow the fear to control you**, for fear can never be a good leader. Risk, for life itself is a daily risk. Feel the fear and take the risk. NEVER PANIC!

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**Be apostles,
nothing but apostles!**

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