

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

NEWSLETTER No. 35

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My dear Friends,

I hope the New Year has been good for you so far! As we are still in January, I want to wish each and everyone of you a very Happy and Blessed New Year. May this time be a source of inspiration and joy as you try to live your Christian vocation to the full.

At the beginning of this month, many students have arrived to start their four years of theology. After three years of philosophy in their home countries (or a nearby country) and one year of spirituality (noviciate), they have already done two years of pastoral experience in different countries of Africa. Two are from Ghana, two from India, two from Rwanda, one from Ethiopia, one from Mexico, one from Burundi and one from Togo. They are now in Merrivale to start their school year in Cedara in February. Together with the other students, they number 23. This Sunday, they are starting their annual eight day retreat at the Pastoral Centre in Bethlehem. Let us pray for them.

On Saturday January 4th, I drive to Merrivale with two of the new students who arrived the day before – one Ghanean and one Mexican. We make a detour via Bethlehem to visit Mpho, an aspirant who just finished his Matrics. He is very much interested to join us. The two students have a good chat with him, giving him good pieces of advice on how to attain his goal as a Missionary of Africa.

The aim of my visit to Merrivale is to meet the Henley Parish Community with Martin, our student who is starting his pastoral experience (we call him “stagiaire” in M.Afr jargon!), so that we can elaborate a programme together. And my plan is to do the same thing next weekend in Lebombo Parish, where our other “stagiaire” Samuel has been appointed. (see the last *Newsletters* where I mentioned them learning Zulu in Assisi).

Unfortunately, on Sunday, after returning from Mass in one of the churches of Henley, we receive a very bad news: our young priest Sébastien Ndrutsomi (Congolese, 37 years old) was killed this morning in a car accident! He was ordained priest only three years ago and was serving in Lebombo Parish. What a sad news! After consulting with my confreres, I decide to continue my programme.



Fr. Sébastien Ndrutsomi

On Thursday 9th I drive from Durban to Hlatikulu, Christ the King Parish, in Swaziland. At 1:30 pm I concelebrate Mass with the Parish Priest for a group of Xaveri youth. After Mass, we have lunch together and we hold a meeting of the leaders of the newly formed Xaveri group. The Parish Priest and the Chairman of the Parish Council are present. All show great interest, and also the issue of vocation comes up. My big question is: who will replace Fr. Sébastien? In the evening, I meet the new Bishop of Manzini - José Ponce de Leone - (who is installed today, 25th January, during the celebrations of the 100 years of the Catholic Church in Swaziland).

On Friday, I drive to Lebombo where the funeral celebrations start in the evening until the morning hours. Then we go to Maria Trost Pastoral Centre (diocese of Witbank) for the funeral Mass and burial. Bishop Sandri and more than 45 priests celebrate the new life of

Fr. Sébastien, with the students from Merrivale and more than 400 people from Lebombo Parish. During his homily, the Bishop also throws the challenge to the youth: “Who will replace Fr. Sébastien?”

Yes, this is a big blow for us all the M.Afr. But this week, a young man came to tell me that he wants to join us and help in becoming a priest... We live in hope. Wishing you a lot of it!

Fr. Michel.

CAPE TOWN COME & SEE: There will be a *Come & See* weekend in Cape town on the first weekend of May (2nd to 4th May) at the Holy Cross Sisters of Parow Valley. More details to come.

Michel Meunier, M.Afr.
Vocation Director
Cell: 072.987.2990
Email: michelm4africa@gmail.com

*Be apostles,
nothing but apostles!*

P.O. Box 10057
Edenglen 1613
Tel: 011.452.5283
Fax: 011.609.9335