

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

NEWSLETTER No. 37

25th March 2014

My dear Friends,

Greetings in this "favourable" time of Lent! Yes, this is a time of favours from our Lord, inviting us to a closer walk with Him. "For the Lord says, "In the time of my favour I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2)



In the last few weeks before Easter, try to do something special to follow the Lord fully! And again, pray in a particular way for your vocation and your friends' vocation!

On Tuesday morning, 11th March, I celebrated Mass at OR Tambo Airport for a group of Cursillo members (a catholic lay movement found in 70

countries around the world) from Durban, Johannesburg and Gibraltar (Google will show you where it is!); they are gone on a very special Mission: to start the Cursillo movement in Uganda, together with two other members from Ireland. Some messages on *WhatsApp* tell us that they are really great missionaries!

A very important event happened for us M.Afr. Some of you will recall that a few years back, Fr. Louis Blondel, M.Afr., was killed in Diepsloot, near Johannesburg. So, three of my confreres who had known Fr. Louis very well and also know his family in France, went to the prison for a prayer of reconciliation; this had been agreed by all the M.Afr. at one of our last meetings. Here, I quote some extracts from the text written by Fr. Didier Lemaire, M.Afr. (see the box) ↑

A TIME TO FORGIVE : ... The prison authorities... were happy to facilitate such a ceremony under their Victims/Offenders Program. Three confreres (Fr. Didier Michon, Fr. Didier Lemaire and Fr. Sean O'Leary) representing the family in France and the M.Afr. in South Africa met the prisoner in the Prison, near Pretoria on March 12th 2014. The period of Lent had been consciously chosen for such a moment. The prison authorities, in the persons of the One in Charge, the Social Worker, the Psychologist and the Chaplain asked to be present and they actively participated. The prisoner (now 22 years of age) was asked to tell what happened in his own words after which, questions of clarity would be asked, followed by prayers of forgiveness.... In a calm voice, he told the story of how the gun had been found in a tavern, how the motive was to rob computers in the parish house, how they had been drinking and smoking drugs, how he felt reluctant to steal from a Church, how he had panicked when confronted by Fr. Louis, how this was the first time he had shot a gun and how terrible he felt after the shooting. Indeed he showed a great deal of remorse some four years after the tragic event. In answering questions, it became very clear that he had no intention to murder; simply an intention to rob. He explained that from the very beginning when he got arrested, he took full responsibility for his actions. All present prayed over the young man asking God to forgive him and set his soul free. The text from Mathew's gospel of: "ask and you will receive" was cited. This was a very moving moment for all present, including the prison authorities. Nelson is studying in prison and hopes to complete the Secondary School Certificate in two years' time, as he had dropped out of school at an early age. His intention is to eventually come out of jail a better person. The psychologist and social worker will write a report about the ceremony for the *Victims/Offenders Programme* which will be included as well in his dossier for Parole. The Missionaries of Africa present pledged to support him in this endeavour with their prayers! Though, still facing many more years in jail, Nelson has now a certain feeling of having been set free.

May we all be able to live this reconciliation that Christ has brought us. This Lenten season is a time for this.

I therefore wish you a very good continuation of your Lenten journey. Prepare yourselves well so that you may rejoice and dance in the great Feast of EASTER!

HAPPY EASTER!

Fr. Michel.

CAPE TOWN COME & SEE: Our *Come & See* is still planned for the first weekend of May (2nd to 4th) at the Holy Cross Sisters of Parow Valley. I am still waiting for your response to know how many of you will be present! Then I'll send you again more details mid-April.

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*Be apostles,
nothing but apostles!*

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