

# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

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My dear Friends,

Greetings! I hope you are fine! This month, as you can see, we have a long article on the Missionary Congress held exactly one month ago. Martin, a student from Burkina Faso, is doing his Pastoral Experience here in SA – in our M.Afr. language, we call such students “stagiaires”. Thank you, Martin, for these reflections.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November, in Malawi I took part in a meeting for Vocation Directors of our Southern Africa Province (Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa & Zambia). These other countries have many aspirants and candidates, but we in SA, lag behind! So far, not one single South African! There, I met our only candidate – Patrick, from DR Congo, but having his family in SA – who seems very happy and is looking forward to finish his third year of philosophy in Balaka before going to the noviciate.

In fact, our meeting was in Balaka, and every day we could meet and chat with the forty students, especially at dinner time, after their long day in school. There is a beautiful atmosphere among them. Besides Patrick, they are from Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique. We had beautiful Masses together, especially in their small teams. The last evening, the students treated us to a braai and some songs and traditional dances. These young men look very happy and prepare themselves seriously to become Missionaries of Africa. Some asked me: “*When are you sending some young South Africans to join us?*”...

Before leaving Malawi, I visited the Home for Street Children “*Tikondane*”, run by our Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (MSOLA) in Lilongwe. They really help the poor children to regain a decent life. Some of them are doing well in school and some are reunited to their families.



Two MSOLA working at the Centre with one of our stagiaires. They are from Congo & Tanzania

God bless you all!  
Fr. Michael

## Missionary Congress in Johannesburg

“Seeing the people, he felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest” Mt:9,36-37

Should it still be said today “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few”, while thousands of thousands are getting baptised and confirmed every year? Yes, the sad reality is that the workers are still few. And here we see a contrast: While many receive Baptism and Confirmation, few are ready to be sent as workers in the harvest of the Lord. Why is it so? This is a question to everybody. Through the zeal of some missionaries, among whom our M.Afr. confrères, the Archdiocese of Johannesburg thinks one of the reasons might be lack of awareness; to work in the harvest of the Lord, we are called to be sent and to take up our crosses and follow Jesus, the first missionary per excellence. To help its different parishes to come to a greater awareness of their missionary call as per their baptism, the Missionary Group of the archdiocese of Johannesburg organised a MISSIONARY CONGRESS with the theme: “ENLARGE THE SPACE OF YOUR TENT” from the prophet Isaiah (54:2). The organisers invited participants to understand that as Christians, moreover as Catholics, they are missionaries, they are called to evangelize; to be a Christian is to take one's share of the mission which we all received from Christ, which he has also received from the Father. Participants were invited to widen the horizons of the mission, to open their heart to others in view of sharing with them the riches of their faith.

I had the opportunity to participate in this congress. I found it a very good tool to bring awareness to the laity that as Christians, “*belonging to Christ and committed to mission*” (theme of Lent 2014) we should be ready to be sent. Different talks, mostly testimonies, were done by bishops, priests, sisters, and lay people to help participants explore ways to fulfil their call to proclaim the Gospel, to move from maintenance to mission. Some group works also were done to help participants to take back to their parishes, motivations to move forward on mission and also to be aware of some challenges in missionary life. I was extremely astonished, as well as some other participants, to hear that there are only 20 South-Africans working outside South Africa as missionaries!

An old wise priest was saying in his homily that evangelisation goes like how one is banished from a country. When one is banished, his own village will take him/her to the next village, the inhabitants of that village will take him/her to the next one and so forth till he reaches where there is no human being. Evangelisation started in Jerusalem. Following the persecution of the first disciples they took out the Gospel to the neighbouring countries like Samaria, from there to Ethiopia with the Eunuch, and with Paul the Gospel spread out until it reached us in South Africa; will we be the ones to stay with a banished man or woman? Or will a banished person die in our hands? We have to take him/her to the next village. Will the Gospel die or get stuck in South Africa in the hands of South Africans because of lack of missionaries to take it farther? Or will it not be a kind of selfishness to be receiving and not dreaming to pass it on to others in need? We are Christians, we belong to Christ, we are committed to Jesus, we are ready to be sent. We pray for this awareness in all Christians.

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**Be apostles,  
nothing but apostles!**

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