



"If you want to walk quickly, walk alone
If you want to walk far, walk together".

Joseph Kallanchira, SVD
AFRAM ZONAL COORDINATOR

afram@svdcuria.org

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AFRAM MATTERS – 7

Dear Fathers
Provincial, Regional and Mission Superiors,
Zonal Area Coordinators,

Christmas chimes are fading away in the air. The last hours of the year 2016 are beckoning us to take stock, count the blessings and fill our hearts with gratitude – for we have all received grace upon grace. Another year is immanently upon us, raising high hopes for purposeful and peaceful times.

It's thus that I come to you with this second issue of the zonal news bulletin for the year that's coming to its close. Mostly it contains items from my recent visits to several of our PRMs in the AFRAM Zone.

Mozambique: I was with Paul Nadolny, the Mission Superior, and our confreres there between August 8–24. There are 18 confreres, three of them Brothers, of nine nationalities. I attended the 3-day Mission assembly which was held at the Consolata Spirituality Centre in Laulane, on the outskirts of Maputo. This was followed by another 3-day on-going formation session for the *Under 5*. Assembly was a time for the confreres to evaluate the progress on the CD implementation. I had the opportunity to present the new text from the Generalate on the profile of the SVD parish. Our parishes are in the archdioceses of Maputo, Beira and Nampula – in the south, centre and north respectively of the country. MOZ has a 4 year philosophy programme for our aspirants - there are 9 students in all this year, of whom two 4th years will be ready for novitiate from January 2017. The first novices from MOZ! Plans are afoot to build the new philosophy house at Laulane. We had one evening Mass and meals with the SSpS at their regional house, also in Maputo.

Uganda / South Sudan: The end of October saw me accompanying the SSD Mission Superior Francis Naduviledathu into some seven South Sudanese refugee settlements in the north-western part of Uganda. We did this together with the

Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda Mgr. Michael Blume, SVD and Mgr. Sabino Odoki of the Arua diocese where those settlements are. Rough estimates, we were told, put the number of refugees anywhere near 300.000. Francis met with several of our Lainya parishioners in the settlements we visited. Based on our report at the end of the visit, Father General gave Francis the green signal to begin pastoral ministry with the South Sudanese in Arua, in collaboration with the local church leaders. Francis has already pitched his tent amongst them since the end of November, staying for the time being with a local parish priest. It may be recalled that the other SSD confreres are preparing themselves to return to their Mission in the near future – so that Francis will have an SVD community as his base, although for the time being he is alone, and the base is going to be in Uganda.

South Africa / Botswana: On invitation from the Provincial Marek Marciniak, I participated in the provincial assembly of BOT, visiting both South Africa and Botswana in the first half of November. I was happy to spend two days with confreres at our Bizana parish in the Kokstad diocese, which is close to Durban, on the Indian Ocean – the SVD parish on the southernmost tip of the African continent. One of the practical concerns of the province is the difficulty in obtaining entry visa/visa renewal to Botswana – this somehow limits especially the interaction between confreres living and working in South Africa, with those in Botswana. Will South Africa also be separated from BOT eventually, like ZIM and ZAM earlier? is a question that's being studied.

The assembly was also the occasion to celebrate 35 years of the SVD BOT existence. The retired archbishop who had welcomed us to that country then was the main celebrant for the Eucharist one evening. One striking aspect in the province's history is that so far we do not have any local vocation to the Society. Both in South Africa and Botswana, confreres make efforts to promote vocations, though.

Ethiopia / Chad: It was my privilege, representing the SVD-Africa, to be invited by Sr. Jerly Renacia, the SSpS regional leader in Addis Ababa, to celebrate the Eucharist on December 8th, during which Meseret, the first-ever Ethiopian professed her religious vows with the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit; she had earlier completed her novitiate formation in Ghana with novices from elsewhere. It was a very joyful occasion which brought together all the 15 Sisters, living in their five communities across Ethiopia, and some family members of the newly professed Sister. There are aspirants and postulants there for the Sisters, following in the footsteps of Meseret.

From Addis Ababa, I proceeded to N'Djamena, the capital city of Chad, where Achille Mpila, the Mission Superior, welcomed me warmly on the 9th. The following day, we drove down to Moundou, some 500 km. It is in Moundou and the neighbouring Gore dioceses that we have the three parishes. Our parishes cover very large regions with countless village outstations. There is an obvious lack of missionary personnel in these dioceses. In our Moundou (the second largest city in the country) parish I was pleasantly surprised to see more than 300 adult catechumens attending classes twice a week, groups both in the local language and in French. The parishes organize themselves into Basic Christian Communities.

The Laramanaye parish community received all the eight confreres for a Mission meeting one day. Among other things, I was able to discuss with the young confreres there the SVD profile of our parishes. I was happy to see our confreres already insisting on our characteristic dimensions in their pastoral outreach, especially in the BPM and JPIC matters.

This place is just about 30 km from the border with Cameroun, where we visited our 'neighbouring parish' in that country, some 30 km into the interior. One interesting development with the Mission, which we began in 2004, is that there are young university students and a few others who are aspirants to the Society. So the confreres are seriously considering beginning a philosophy-cum-propaedeutic programme, very likely from the next academic year. The not-so-far Sarh diocese hosts the national seminary of the Episcopal Conference for philosophy, where Comboni students already attend philosophy classes.

News Briefs:

One Year in Liberia: It is good to note that in November of this year, life and ministry of our confreres in the Liberia district of GHA, have crossed the first year mark. A new presbytery is under construction in our Zwedru parish there, as presently our confreres are living in the renovated convent left behind by the Sisters. A second parish community within the Zwedru parish area seen its vastness, and another one in the capital Monrovia, are among the near-future development plans there.

Verbum Bible: The New Jerusalem Bible project of our VB is really in progress. Xene Sanchez informs us from Kinshasa (CNG) that VB has signed a contract with the London-based DLT publishers who retain the copyright for this English edition for an initial printing of 50.000 copies. They should soon be available. Confreres working in our English-speaking countries, especially the BPM area coordinators, could really and eagerly make use of this opportunity to obtain sufficient number of copies for sale/distribution in their respective places. Wojciech Szypula, our BPM zonal area coordinator, is already in contact with them in this regard.

LectioYouth.Net: In a communique, our confrere Jan Stefanów, the Executive Secretary of the CBF, announced the launching of the biblical programme *lectioyouth.net* on the Internet. Here is an excerpt from what he wrote end of November: "It's a pleasure for us to announce that by the initiative of the General Secretariat of the Catholic Biblical Federation a new biblical service is operating since this week on the Internet. The program, intended primarily but not exclusively, for the youth, provides materials for forming and running local Bible study and reflection groups. These materials are available online (www.lectioyouth.net); besides on Facebook, and also through smartphone app. It has great potential for expanding our biblical outreach because it has some quite unique and useful features. The approach is quite innovative (see the attached Information sheet). As Biblical Animators, this new initiative offers us a new possibility to focus and reinvigorate our biblical apostolate". Confreres are invited to browse through the website and who knows, could be inspired, besides finding inspirational biblical material for their ministry. Wojciech Szypula has written already to the PRM BPM coordinators with more details.

Treasurers' Workshop: Nairobi (KEN) is hosting the next two-week workshop for all the PRM treasurers and their assistants, if any, from January 25th through February 5th, 2017. Godwin Fiawoyi, the zonal area coordinator for the Treasurers, is the main organizer of the workshop, together with Leo Fernando of KEN, being the local resource person. Experts coming from Rome and Chicago will be addressing practical financial issues, including self-reliance investments, during the workshop.

Next ExeCom Meeting: The Executive Committee of the Zone will meet in the middle of February 2017 – this time in Lusaka (ZAM). One interesting reason that takes the ExeCom to Zambia is to have an on-the-site study and deliberations on setting up a new English-language common novitiate for our zone, probably there. The distribution of the present novices to the different CFCs and other centres for theological training is also part of the agenda.

Personally Speaking: I will be attending the next caucus session of the Generalate from January 4 to 12th, 2017. Preparations for the next General Chapter, obviously, is the high point of the agenda, as I see it in the programme.

With thanks to each of you for your kind attention to the contents of this news bulletin, may I request you to inform our confreres in the best way possible of what's happening at the zonal level, so that all of us walk together in our zonal adventure here in the African continent.

Let me then conclude with the expression of my best wishes for a peaceful and fruitful missionary year ahead for all of us in 2017. A Blessed New Year!!!

As always in the Divine Word,

Joseph Kallanchira, SVD
AFRAM Zonal Coordinator

