

# Missionaries of Africa

White  
Fathers



# Mission Today

**A trip to Africa... A few years service... A lifetime commitment...**

**The Missionaries of Africa, sons and daughters of Lavigerie are present and active in 25 countries of Africa, as well as in the African world outside the continent.**

**Since 140 years, their aim is to commit themselves by words and deeds in the “style of Jesus”. Their motivation is to expand the action of God in the history of humankind, as we understand it when reading the Bible and the Gospels. At present, there are more than 400 young people between the ages of 20 and 35 who are in formation in our Missionary Society.**

**Are you interested? Curious? We offer you a preparation before joining those who dare to meet Africans in “the style of Jesus”.**

**For more information, you can contact Father Gilles Barrette, director of the Afrika Center in Montreal:**

**gilbar1945@yahoo.ca**

**Telephone: (1) 514 849 1167**

**or contact the Missionaries whose addresses are listed on the last page of this News Letter.**



**The Missionaries of Africa on'the Internet  
Do you know these Websites of the White Fathers?**

Canadian Website: Montreal:

[www.mafr.net](http://www.mafr.net)

American Website: Washington:

[www.missionariesofafrica.org](http://www.missionariesofafrica.org)

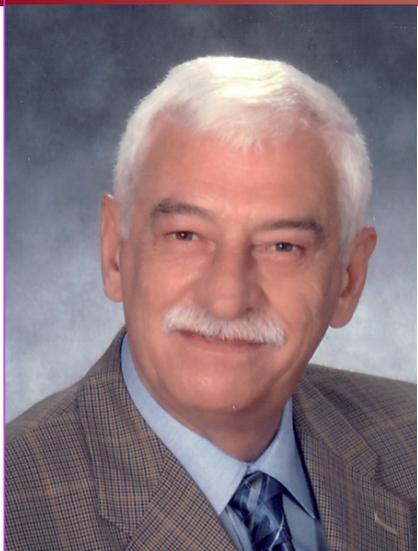
Mexican Website: Guadalajara:

[www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx](http://www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx)

International Website: Rome:

[www.africamission-mafr.org](http://www.africamission-mafr.org)

Et aussi nos sites d'Espagne, France, Grande-Bretagne, Belgique, Italie, Burkina Faso...



## By love, by solidarity, I stay with you

Dear Benefactors, Our General Assembly of the Missionaries of Africa in 2010, had invited us to take a step forward in our commitment for the Mission, in particular in the Encounter and the Dialogue and our service in Justice and Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Since the beginning of our Missionary Society (1868), the missionaries endeavoured to be closed to the persons to whom their fundamental rights were denied. Today still, the Churches in different African countries ask us to pursue our commitment to be the defenders of the ill-treated people.

Last November, one of our confreres from Burkina-Faso, working in the United States, was among the main organizers of a wide African conference which took place in Kenya. The topic of the venue was twofold: 1) Many countries, many organisations coming from abroad take up all the land rich in revenue, by driving out the farmers, pushing them on the roads of exile, and that with the complicity of the local leaders. 2) The compelling strings of Power or the States apparatus: how difficult it is for the leaders whose mandate has come to an end, to turn the page, and leave the place to new faces. The Missionaries of Africa are involved very often in delicate situations. In the years, between 1980 and 1990, many have been expelled and had to start again somewhere else. Defending the dignity of all human beings has led to death three of our confreres in Rwanda in 1994; four others in Algeria that same year. Other confreres have also made the experience of imprisonment. These days, it is the turn of Burundi and of the Democratic Republic of Congo to go through difficult times.

Lay Canadian Missionaries are also involved in serving the African populations: unfortunately some have fallen, victims of the links created throughout the months: it was the case lately in Burkina-Faso.

Some confreres are involved in some European countries, as well as here in Canada, to practice their compassion. (Pope Francis is inviting us in this year of Mercy: Mercy is to let vibrate the sensitive strings of my paternal heart and my maternal womb)

The testimony of love is without frontiers. Why leave? And let the people manage for themselves? And if I stay just for the sake of love and solidarity: this is what is lived in the heart of the missionary, to the risk of his life.

Gilles Barrette  
Provincial Superior

# The mission of the White Fathers continues

**Father Paul Traore, director of the Minor Seminary of San, gives us the history of the Church in Mali, together with his Center of Formation. He will also give us his work among the young seminarians who prepare themselves for their future priestly mission. This testimony is also part of the history of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) in Mali.**



**Father Paul Traore.**

Catholicism appeared in Mali with the first missions between 1876 and 1881, when Cardinal Lavigerie sent some missionaries at Timbuktu, and they were killed on their way.

The Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers also sent at the same time other missionaries who, started in 1888, the first parish in Mali. The evangelisation was accelerated with the arrival in 1895 of the Missionaries of Africa. Therefore, November 20, 1888 has become the

date that remains in the memory of the Christians of Mali. It was the anniversary of the foundation of the parish of Kita, the first parish in Mali. Since then, six dioceses were erected: Bamako, Kayes, Mopti, Segou, Sikasso and San.

## **The Founders**

On October 15, 1888, six Holy Ghost missionaries leave Senegal for Mali. They were the Fathers Guillet, Montel, Marcot, and the Brothers Zenon and Isaac. Brother Isaac molded with the soil of the marsh Bangassi, the statue which is still in the sanctuary of Kita that is Our Lady of Mali.

Kita, Kayes and Dinguiray were the first and last mission founded by the Spiritan Fathers. The mission will continue with the four White Fathers arriving on the first of April 1895 at Segou, the first parish of the sons of Cardinal Lavigerie in French Soudan.

From this first team, two Fathers will remain on the spot to start the mission, Father Ficheux and Father Éveillard. The two others, Father Hacquard and Dupuis, will pursue their journey to Timbuktu, reaching the place in May 22. Finally Timbuktu! Father Hacquard will write these words which underline the importance of Timbuktu in the project of Cardinal Lavigerie: “When I saw Timbuktu, I believe that I had gone mad. I cannot tell the emotions that I felt, a mixture of joy, hope and sadness, a return to the past, and a jump into the future... Myself, facing the



The four White Fathers sent by Cardinal Lavigerie.

target desired by our elders...”

Thus with the arrival of the Missionaries to Timbuktu and their settlement at Segou marked the beginning of a missionary influence and many more foundations. Under the pastoral responsibility of Father Hacquard appointed Prefect Apostolic and of his successors, the mission will know an important influence in French Sudan, now called Mali.

### San, a commercial center

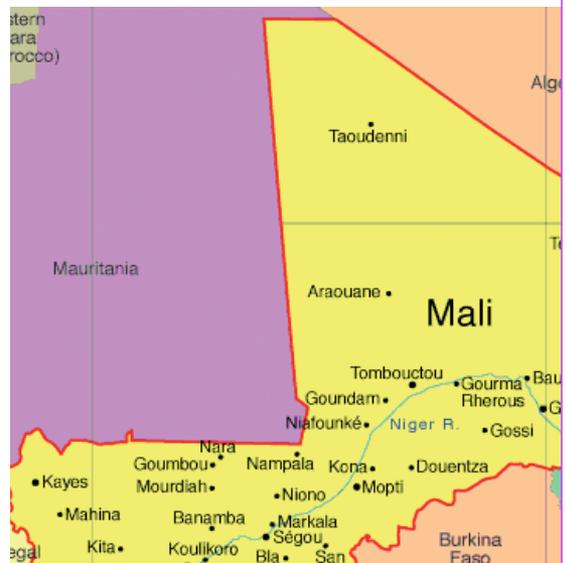
Since the Middle-Age, the river Niger has always been a way taken by the dugout canoes to bring to Djenne the plates of salt from Timbuktu, before reaching San the commercial center. The caravans would carry up to the North, millet and kola.

### Arrival of the first Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)

Bishop Toulotte, a White Father, started

Segou in 1895 and his successor, Bishop Lemaitre opened Toma in 1913, then Minankofa, in May 1920. In 1921, Bishop Sauvant became the Apostolic Vicar of Bamako. A year later, he decided to make new foundations. In September 15, 1922, he opened the mission of Sikasso and sent three missionaries at Mandiakuy.

Here are the names of the three pionners who went to San: the Fathers Felix Theaudiere, Ernest Duvernois and Eugene Ratisseau. They left Segou in the small railway train Decauville, with a narrow gauge that ran until 1962. Their first stage is at Minankofa, where they board the dugout canoes up to Belenityeni. They arrive at San with the wagons and three bicycles. They are welcomed by Bishop Garbou, a White Father, by the commander of Cercle, who will advise them to settle in some villages far from the Administration: Somo, Benena, Mandiakuy or Sanekuy. They choose Mandiakuy and reach it on



Map of Mali.

October 9, 1922. They speak “Bambara” and they do not know a word in “Boxe”. At Mandiakuy, they are introduced by the village chief, Sonu Dakouo. They settle down briefly at Balu, and then they will build six huts outside the village, where they will spend their first few years. The first mission, in “banco” (soil mixed with straw) is built on the spot where we have the church at present, in 1924.

### **A mosaic of cultures and languages**

The population is quite varied. You can find the Bwa, the Bambara, the Marka, the Dafing, the Peulh, the Minianka and the Bozo. There is also a small community of Bella at San, with a few Dogon and Songhai. These people are Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and of traditional religions.

This extraordinary mixture of cultures, languages, and religious practices is enrichment for the diocese. On the level of the Catholic Church, the Bore and the Bamanan have been introduced as the liturgical languages. The majority of the inhabitants in



**Seminarians in class.**

the diocese are farmers and breeders.

### **The picture of the Diocese**

Being rural, the Diocese was able to adapt itself in order to answer the needs for the evangelisation. Since 1965, it has opened a Minor Seminary at Togo, in the parish of Sokura, where 40 priests and two Bishops have been trained. Two Training Centers for farmers were started at Zura in 1968 and at Koni in 1971. In 1974, the Diocese opened a Training Center for the catechists at Dobwo, 180 of them have received training.

### **Middle Seminary at San**

A Middle Seminary at San opened its doors on October 12, 2007, with 10 youngsters. After 8 years, it has trained 72 seminarians, out of which nine are actually at the Major Seminary of Saint-Augustine at Samya, in the Archdiocese of Bamako. At the start of the school year 2015, the Seminary numbered 36 seminarians, 14 in their second year and 17 in their final year.

Their formation is done by four diocesan priests: Father Paul Traore, is the Director; Father Apolinaire Denou, the Bursar; Father Fernand Kone and Farher



**Hard work for the young seminarians.**

Cyriaque Diarra.

### **Life at the Seminary**

The team for the Seminary proposes a self-involvement in the pastoral field, which means that the pastoral agents are involved in concrete actions through their initiatives and good management. It is in this vision that the formation team of the Middle Seminary is involved and wishes to train the seminarians to become self-supporting, through activities such as agricultural products, breeding and gardening, thus providing what is necessary to feed the community of the Seminary.

### **The aims of the Seminary**

The Middle Seminary at San was created in order to fulfil the pastoral objectives by realising the option of self-supporting. Moreover, we wish to instill in the youngsters the reality of the mission and the diocese, that is, a human, intellectual, manual ad spiritual formation.



**Chapel of the Middle Seminary.**

Thus, it becomes important to involve all the members of the diocesan family (diocesan priests, lay people, religious men and women) in the process of training the seminarians. This means that we have to control the cost of the formation of the seminarians, thanks to the support provided by the parents and the seminarians themselves.

Therefore we offer to these youngsters a serious Christian formation, and a framework to community life, where responsibility and discipline are at the center of their life. Finally, we wish to prepare the Seminarians to freely enter at the Major Seminary to pursue their training.

This text, inspired by the History of the Church in Mali and by the testimony of Father Paul Traore, is written by Father Michel Fortin, M. Afr.



**Fruit's tree full of oranges.**

## Project Mali No 41

# Support for the orphanage of Providence Dofini at San

The project comes from Mali and requires our attention, since it touches the most fragile, mainly young orphans. Father Martin Bloomaert, Missionary of Africa, will take care that our donation will be used properly so that the orphans of the sisters Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (FCIM) can fully benefit from it.

### FCIM

This Institute was founded in 1934 by a Missionary of Africa, Bishop Paul-Marie Molin, who was then the Apostolic Vicar at Bamako, capital of Mali. There were many important needs toward the women, in health and education. Most interesting, the Sisters are found in many countries, having



Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (FCIM)

a missionary spirit just like their founder. They are in Morocco, Ivory Coast, Algeria and France. They are not numerous, only 100, but very much involved.

In Mali, they opened an orphanage, since orphans are not easily welcomed by their families: a child, whose mother died during childbirth, brings misfortune. Therefore the Sisters have built a place to welcome these children: they are more than 100, from the age of 1 to 13.

At the beginning, the Sisters returned the children to their family after a period of two years. Then they understood that the children were ill-treated and many were dying in early age. They had to adapt their method and they built a home in San, a town of 60,000 inhabitants.

There are 100 orphans living there. They are only four religious sisters who take care for their education. The children start their schooling at the age of 3. There



are 3 monitors, one nurse, cooks, security members, one gardener, all working at the orphanage.

To realise their project, the Sisters have received gifts. They built dormitories, play



**We have to dress the children properly**

grounds, washing facilities, a kitchen and a canteen. The gifts enabled them to build a house for the Sisters, and facilities to have drinking water and electricity, a vegetable garden and an orchard, so the children can be well-fed. Moreover they opened a kinder garden and a school for the poor children of the neighbourhood.

In that orphanage, the Sisters endeavor to transmit the human and Christian values, while taking care of their health and hygiene, fostering mutual help among the children, the elder helping the younger. They asked them to be involved in the daily tasks, creating a fraternal atmosphere.

#### **Future projects requiring gifts:**

This humanitarian aid cannot be restricted to these actual activities. New needs emerge all the time. The Sisters are

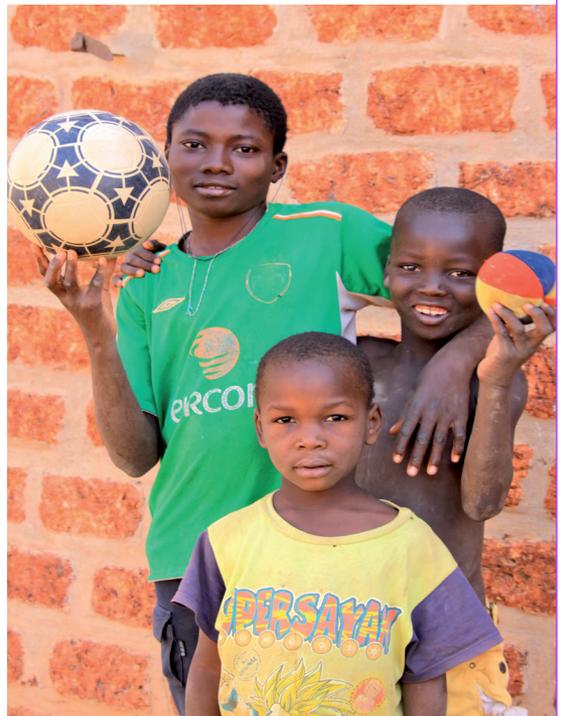
so devoted to these abandoned youngsters.

These are new needs:

- We are still on the lookout for the basic food (milk, cereals, and vegetables)
- A minibus to carry the children
- The proper furniture for our childcare Center
- We need school material
- We have to dress the children properly
- We have to build 6 classrooms for our Second Cycle

Quite a list! The Sisters are grateful for whatever you can do to help them in their project, especially during this year of divine Mercy.

Father Martin Bloomaert, M.Afr.  
Sister Esther Thera, Superior General  
of the Daughters of the Immaculate  
Heart of Mary.



### Very hot... or very cold



Women visiting the empty tomb.

have some reference to that game of my childhood. The first text speaks of the empty tomb on Easter morning (Luke 24, 1-13). To the first women coming to the tomb of Jesus, two angels tell them that he was not there, but he had risen. Because of my game, I can imagine what the two angels meant to say to the women: “You are freezing; you will not see him alive here.” In my breviary, during the time of Easter, one can read: “You left the tomb empty. Keep us from looking where you are not”.

The second text that would remind me of the game, it is the one about the disciples on their way to Emmaüs. 2,000 years later, the exact spot is still under scrutiny: there are about three locations! I myself visited two different places, and found nothing. We know the name of only one of the two disciples: he was called Cleopas.



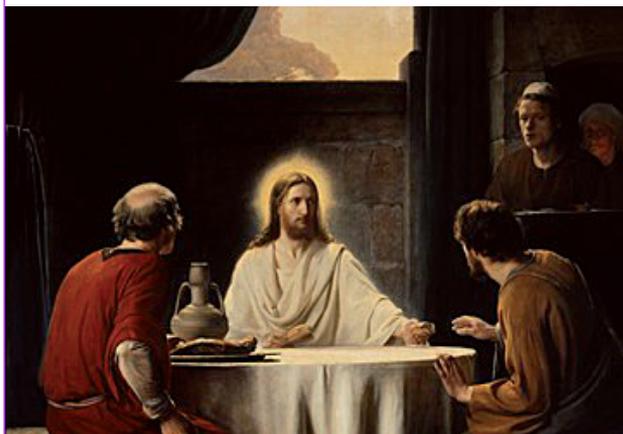
Jesus walking with the two disciples of Emmaüs.

You may perhaps remember that game of hide-and-seek that we used to cherish when we were young. One of the gang would hide something and then he had to lead all the others to the hidden object. He would tell them: “You are cold... freezing” saying by that that they were far from the treasure; “You are tepid, you burn” indicating they were getting closer to the hidden treasure.

Our beautiful feast of Easter reminds me of two biblical texts which

Coming back to the game of my youth, at Emmaüs, I was “very, very cold”, far from finding what Jesus wanted me to discover, just like the disciples. They were very far (very cold) and at the same time very close (very hot) to the hidden treasure that was walking with them, Jesus himself, “but their eyes were prevented from recognising him!”

“He explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures



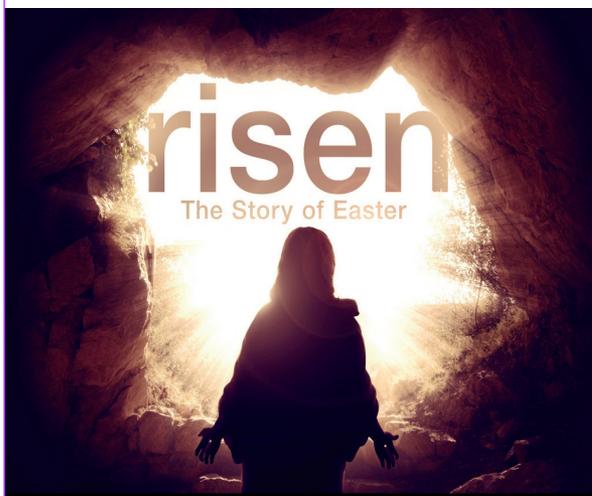
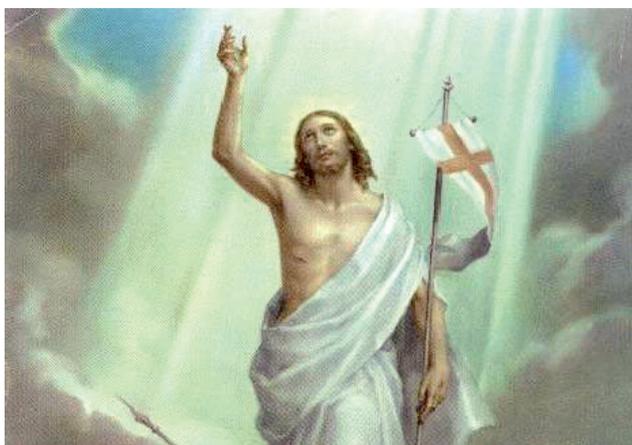
that were about himself”. Then, without recognising him immediately, the presence of Jesus brought warmth to their hearts. They said later on: “Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?”

We know what followed: Jesus guided them in a very fine manner, by breaking the bread with them. “Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him” What a nice

simplicity on behalf of Jesus, the Son of God! How I would have like to have been with them, like many other Christians as well.

And yet since our childhood, God plays this kind of game of hide-and-seek with each one of us. He does not want us to search him anywhere, anyway, above all in empty and “cold” tombs. “Keep us from looking for you where you are not”.

He likes to hide himself in very modest and humble things: in the bread of the Eucharist, in the



simple daily events, in our personal lives. Yet Jesus prefers the warmth of our human hearts, the friendship and the love of his children. Whenever we see him in our neighbours, above all in the destitute, we really find him. Then he whispers to us: “You are very hot... my love burns you.”

Lionel Dion, M. Afr

# The Church in Africa

The African Church has experienced in the last 50 years an amazing and continuous growth. Now she has in front important challenges, which call on her to continue rowing “into the sea” towards a greater evangelical depth.

## The context of the growth

The history of success repeats itself in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Malawi, Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria... At the present time, Africa has almost 200 million Catholics, the 18.9 per cent of the total population, to which we must add the members of other Christian denominations, constituting a consistent Christian presence, especially at the south of the Sahel; in the north of the continent are, as it is well known, predominantly Muslims.

This success was not foreseen 50 years ago. Instead what happened was a progressive consolidation of the African Christianity, to the point of becoming a fundamental element in the modern African societies. Even more, it is said that by 2050 three African countries — Uganda, DR Congo and Nigeria — will be among the ten most Catholic countries in the world.

## Multiple challenges

Everything perfect, then? Not at all. Each country, each diocese and each community faces many and varied challenges, depending on their level of growth. Some of the common challenges the Christian



Africans of all countries.

communities face in the continent are:

## Frontier missions

Some African countries have minority groups, which have remained at the edge of Society and continue being the recipient of first evangelization, in the traditional sense; such are the cases of the pygmies of Congo, Cameroon and Central African Republic; the pastoralist peoples of Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda, the Gumuz of Ethiopia, etc. In addition, almost all African cities are surrounded by slum peripheries. In all these situations the action of the Church is one of “first evangelization” or “frontier mission”, with great challenges of diverse kinds: geographic, economic and cultural, and lack of personnel, among many others.

## Deepening and coherence

At this time of new evangelization in the Traditional Churches, in Africa the great challenge can be a deepening in the faith and in the coherence of life. There are many Catholics superficially evangelized, who require an in-depth evangelization. This evangelizing activity must lead to a true inculturation of the faith, not only in the ritualistic sense, but especially of

a faith that becomes life at the personal, community, social and family levels.

### **Formation of the numerous vocations**

Many dioceses and congregations are receiving a real invasion of youth, a fact that, together with enthusiasm and joy, brings the natural worry about their formation and constitutes a great responsibility for the whole Church. These young people — and the communities they are called to serve within a few years — deserve an adequate integral preparation, which includes good theological studies and other sciences, besides a suitable human, moral and spiritual formation.

### **“Church family” model**

The African Synod found the concept of “family” as the icon to express the model of Church that it wanted to have for the continent. It has been a success and it can help to give a sense and an orientation to the life of the Church. But the great challenge is to make the icon act as an image from which to make the pastoral plans, nurture the relationship between bishops and priests, between priest and laity, etc.

### **Configuration of a new missionary model of exchange**

Now is the time to give form to a new missionary model, which we could define as “multi-track”: from all parts to all parts. Africa still needs the contribution and collaboration of other churches, and being at the same time a source of missionaries for the world. Experience and openness of mind will direct how to walk in this new situation.

The message of the II African Synod thus expressed this new situation: “This



**Women of Afrika.**

Synod feels the duty to express its deep appreciation for the many missionaries, clergy, religious and lay faithful from other continents, who have brought the faith to most of the countries of Africa. Many of them are still working there with zeal and heroic dedication. Special thanks go to those who have remained with their people even in times of war and grave crisis. Some have even paid for their fidelity with their very lives” (no. 13).

### **Financial and organizational autonomy**

The African Church still depends excessively on external help, which is however something normal within the frame of Christian solidarity. But it is evident that the situation must not continue indefinitely and that the Christian communities must find ways for self-financing and self-organizing. The process has already started and must be accelerated.





(Cut here and insert in the return envelope with your donation)

# I wish to help the Missionaries of Africa

Donation \$ for the project Mali # 41”.

Donation \$ for the Missionaries of Africa.

## Mass Stipends \$

For a donation of \$1 0 or more, you will receive a receipt for tax purposes. Other ways of helping the Mission:

### Life annuity investments

- Are you worried about the returns on your investments?

- Do you wish to contribute to the support of the Missionaries of Africa work? 1 - I you are 60 or over, you can put your money into the Missionaries of Africa (White 1 Fathers) Life annuity investment. This annuity is guaranteed for life and offers a rate 1 varying between 6% and 9% (according to age and sex).

- You will receive a tax receipt for at least 20% of the sum paid in. Only a small part of

1 the payments you receive would be liable for tax. Bequest and legacies

“Better let our silver go on brother or friend, do not let it go to waste, rusting under a u

Stone. “ (Si. 29:10)

### Bursaries for Missionary of Africa candidates

- One-year scholarship: \$1,700

- Three-year scholarship: \$5,000

I enclose a cheque payable to the Missionaries of Africa

I prefer to pay by credit card (tick which card)



### # Card-

expiry: 1

Signature- 1

**N.B.: If so request our “Letter to our friends “ will be sent to you free of charge, twice a year as well as a calendar**

Telephone No Postal address-

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Thank you!

“Keep Africa in mind!”  
<http://www.mafr.net>

Missionaries of Africa Houses in Canada



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