

# Missionnaires of Africa

## White Fathers



“Chosen to serve...”



The mission of the Missionaries of Africa is closely linked to issues of peace and social justice, intercultural, religious, and ecumenical dialogue. Our integration in all these areas is manifested in our pastoral commitments in parishes and in our specialized centers, especially on the African continent. In the name of gospel values, we also campaign against modern forms of slavery.

We live in interracial communities reflecting the image of an increasingly universal world. The Missionaries of Africa number about 1200 members, priests, brothers and lay associates, from 36 different nationalities. Our houses of formation welcome nearly 500 young people who want to witness to their faith and hope.

**For more information, please contact**  
with Serge St-Arneault at 514-849-1167 ext. 217  
or by email to [ams.voc@mafr.org](mailto:ams.voc@mafr.org)

## Missionaries of Africa on the Internet



Canadian website: <https://mafr.net/>  
Afrika Centre website in Montreal:  
<https://www.centreafrica.com/fr/>



U.S. site in Washington:  
<https://missionariesofafrica.org/>  
International site in Rome:  
<https://mafrome.org/>



Mexican site in Guadalajara:  
<http://www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx/>



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady  
of Africa in Rome:  
<https://www.msolafrica.org/fr/>

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or by phone at 514-849-1167 ext. 111

Note: words in blue open links on internet.

## Seek earnestly the greatest gifts (1Cor 12.31)

The magazine La Lettre aux Amis has had a facelift. The year 2022 marks a new stage in our desire to seize new opportunities in

the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Missionaries of Africa in Canada, like you and the rest of humanity, are wondering about the future of our society, of our world.

The earth continues to turn and so do we. Instead of turning on ourselves, like a whirlwind, our gaze is pointed towards other horizons. In this issue of The Letter to Friends we will go to Tunisia to meet an exceptional community made up of Christians and Muslims where ecumenism and religious dialogue are lived daily with respect for all.

Artistic expression is an extraordinary way to illustrate the precious gift of love. It is a collective wealth of almost infinite variety. The African world present in our country now has a place to disseminate this wealth. The Afromusée (see on page 6) will **build new bridges** towards the recognition and enhancement of the history of Afro-descendants, which dates back more than three centuries in Canada.

African art is inspired and inspiring. On the cover page and on page 7, you will notice an exceptional image of Christ; a sculpture by James Samikwa from Malawi. The finesse of the details illustrates the cosmic power par excellence of the healing Christ.

The gift of hope is also to be sought constantly. Read the extraordinary struggle of Sister Marie Stella from Togo. This same hope is celebrated on the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa located in Algiers. Once again, this historic gift **builds bridges between religions**. This sanctuary promotes dialogue and sharing between Christians and Muslims. The same is true from an intellectual point of view with the creation of a new bilingual magazine focusing on Islamic-Christian studies in Africa.

The spiritual gift that we received from our founder, Cardinal Lavigerie leads us to be sensitive to the realities of today's world and to dare to constantly modify or reassess our mission.

It is in this respect that the encyclical of Pope Francis entitled Fratelli Tutti is particularly significant for us. Despite the numerous confinements, a consequence of the spread of Covid-19, we insist on **building bridges**.

Finally, we propose today to support a commendable initiative for the protection of albinos in Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo. A lot of effort and ardor have been invested in this project, which has already made it possible to restore dignity to many people who have been discriminated against.

Let us persist together in earnestly seeking the greatest gifts.

Fr Serge St-Arneault, M.Afr



## Interreligious Dialogue in Gabès, Tunisia

**Founded in 1868, in Algiers, by Mgr Lavigerie, then archbishop of this city and future cardinal, the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) are an institute essentially oriented towards the mission ad extra. From the outset, the founder clearly formulated the priorities that defined his project: to constitute a society devoted to the evangelization of Africa, made up of men of all nationalities and ready to commit themselves to a lifestyle marked by family spirit and by working together.**

### Ecumenism in Gabès

Our small Catholic parish in Gabès is made up of about fifteen students and a few Europeans living in this region. The community of Missionaries of Africa, residing in Sfax, is responsible for this parish.

We celebrate a weekly mass there every Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Normally, there is no Eucharist on weekdays except on major holidays such as Christmas, New Year and Easter.

Remarkably, the spirit of communion unites Christian students coming from different African countries, some belonging to various Protestant Christian Churches. All participate freely in various religious and social activities. This reflects a beautiful and sincere image of ecumenism. They pray together, share the Bible and establish fraternal relationships. Living in a predominantly Muslim environment, deepening and affirming their Christian faith takes on great importance.

Moreover, just before the Covid-19 cut the rhythm of our ministry, we were also in

contact with some American and European couples who work in different associations in the south of Tunisia. Catholic or not, these couples came to mass from time to time, regularly inviting their Tunisian Muslim colleagues.

Being the only church in Gabès, and a small church at that, this context forces us to work together, to listen to each other and to help each other.

We planned to start a new project every Sunday afternoon. Unfortunately, that could not happen. Indeed, we priests must always be back in Sfax where we live before nightfall.



The church of Gabès in Tunisia.

## Interreligious Dialogue

Tunisian society is practically 100% Muslim. Surprisingly, our activities frequently bring together Muslim students and their Tunisian friends. Each year, when new students are welcomed, the number of Muslims far exceeds that of Christians. It is the same for the sports activities that we organize. Whether one is Christian or Muslim, religious affiliation is not a source of division.

Officially recognized as a place of worship by the Tunisian authorities, the parish is for us and for many people a meeting place. One of the challenges we face is the difficulty of getting in touch with Tunisian families in Gabès. Not being able to reside in this city permanently, it is difficult for us to create lasting relationships with the families.

Fortunately, the charitable works that we do as a community have allowed us to come into contact with a number of them, to share their joys and their sufferings on a daily basis.

When the need to help one or the other person arises, we discern together as a community, and act regardless of the person's religious denomination or origin.

## Conclusion

In Gabès or Sfax, we are pastors for everyone; Catholics, Protestants, Muslims or non-believers. As much as we can, we support all people in need. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are lived daily. We could not achieve our social engagement goals without the participation or involvement of our Muslim brothers and sisters.

Father Robbin Zimbeye, M.Afr

Sfax and Gabès, located on the shore of the Gulf of Gabès, are separated by 160 km or two hours by road. The Catholic Church of Gabès has been officially closed since 2006, but served to this day by the Missionaries of Africa residing in Sfax.

**Link: Parish of Gabès**

<http://eglisesfax.blogspot.com/2010/12/paroisse-gabes.html>

**(In French)**



**Born in 1985, Father Robbin Zimbeye is from Kabwe in Zambia. A member of the Society of Missionaries of Africa since 2015, he was appointed in 2016 to the Maghreb, more precisely to Tunisia.**

## AFROMUSÉE

Originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mushagalusa Chigoho founded in 2014 an African art gallery and a cultural centre open to diversity with the conviction that art is a powerful means of education, gathering and awareness on the social issues of our time.

An amateur and collector of African art, Mushagalusa Chigoho's mission is to promote the history of Afro-descendants that dates back more than three centuries in Canada.

Like him, many Canadians of African descent are looking for ways and places to showcase the contribution of their ancestors in building our country. Since then, the art gallery has given way to the Afromuseum in 2017 in order to give a visible place to illustrate and exhibit the cultural riches of African origin; traditional and modern visual art, musical and gastronomic creativity.

Led by a diverse and experienced board of directors, the Afromuseum targets a wide community by offering an accessible cultural experience in its Montreal-based and digitally accessible cultural experience.

The institution also wants to promote economic, cultural, and inter-university exchanges between Canada, Quebec and African countries that have been experiencing continuous and accelerated growth for more than 10 years.

Across Canada, universities, organizations and private collectors have many African publications, collections and archives. This heritage deserves to be known. The Afromuseum wishes to position itself as the institution and partner of reference with these organizations for making known this content.

The Afromuseum also wants to become the promotional showcase of artists or any other authors who share its values.



Mushagalusa Chigoho,  
General Manager and founder  
of the Afromuseum

**Espace Mushagalusa**

**533 Ontario Est Street  
Montréal  
QC H2L 1N8**





Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art, Mua Mission, Malawi

## Christ - the victorious African

Religious art is one of the main sources of inspiration in the field of music, painting or sculpture. The Bible and Gospel scenes abound on stained glass windows of churches, and also on medals. In their own way, African artists also express their understanding of the Holy Scriptures according to their cultural environment.

Under the direction of Father Claude Boucher, a Canadian missionary, the KuNgoni Cultural Centre in Malawi allowed many of these talented sculptors to express the Christian faith from a new angle, according to a sensitivity of their own.

One of them is James Samikwa. His sculpture entitled «*Christ- the Victorious African*» highlights Jesu's mighty healing power. The people are no longer condemned to suffer the bondage of disease, physical and spiritual.

The accounts of healings that we find in the Gospels attest that Jesus is a great healer. He heals far beyond the human body. Thanks to him, reconciliation between humans and God acts as a powerful remedy to harmonize broken human relationships. This thought is extremely valuable in a cultural context that strongly values harmonious cohesion between people.

The *sing'anga*, meaning the traditional doctors or sorcerers, uses plants, minerals or bones of animals to act on the troubled bodies and minds in order to heal the sick.

Their science is based on ancestral wisdom that has proven itself.

Christ is the perfect *sing'anga*. His incarnation, his teachings and the gift of his life, in an unparalleled gesture of forgiveness, make him the cosmic healer par excellence.



**Christ - the Victorious African.**

Artwork by James Samikwa,  
KuNgoni Cultural Centre, Mua, Malawi.

## The “Living in Hope” association

After many years as managing editor of the magazine *Letter to our Friends*, Father Jacques Poirier is back in Burkina Faso, a country bordering Togo. He knows Sister Marie Stella of the Congregation of the Sisters Hospitallers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus well.

### Sister Marie Stella Founded the “Living in Hope” Association

Sister Marie Stella has joined the war against AIDS, this disease that destroys people in all their dimensions, physical, mental, social and spiritual. This disease is still wreaking havoc in her country, Togo.

In the last twenty years, with her association, she has taken care of 1500 orphaned children, some of them HIV positive, and accompanied 3000 adults. To achieve this, she has set up a health centre, a farm, a library and training workshops.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) makes poverty even more extreme in a region where people are malnourished. It tears families apart and stirs up selfishness.

*“I changed and grew, admits Marie Stella. I deepened my faith in contact with the children and all those who participated in the great chain of solidarity that was formed around us. We try to be a dynamic and exemplary NGO in order to tirelessly continue the difficult battles to be fought.*

*It is above all through hope, through this unconditional love of life, drawn from the love of Christ, that we can succeed in improving, a little, the lot of the poorest of the poor.”*



Main building of the “Living in Hope” association, **Dapaong in Togo**.  
Photo : Yoabone Jean, February 2020

### “Struggles make us grow”

Sophie Laurant, journalist at *Le Pèlerin* and Sister Marie Stella have just co-authored a book, recently published by Éditions Bayard, “Notre combat nous grandit,” which means “Struggles make us grow.”



### Reference (in French)

*“Après des orphelins et des sidéens au Togo”*  
: Sœur Marie Stella - YouTube



# Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers

## For 150 years at the service of fraternity

150 ans  
سنة



1872-2022

Dear brothers of Alger,  
on January 13, 2022, the day after the Berber New Year 2972, we want to highlight our joy to celebrate with you the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers.

A close bond unites the basilica and the Missionaries of Africa of Canada. Indeed, a commemorative plaque on a wall of this church refers to our former scholasticate, that is to say the training centre for Missionary of Africa students (White Fathers) in Canada. This building located in Ottawa, our national capital, no longer exists today, but, thanks to this memorial, the more than century-old commemoration of the basilica allows us to revive our link with the source of our missionary identity.

Our founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, wanted this sanctuary to be a place to

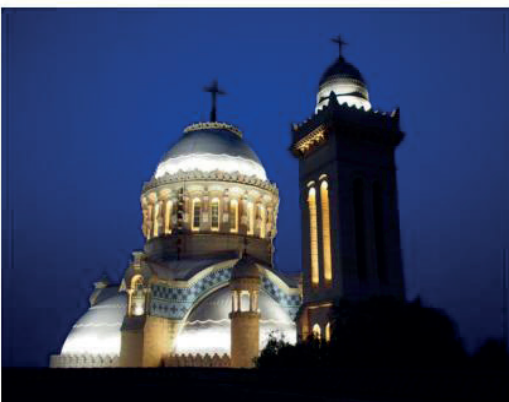
promote dialogue and sharing between Christians and Muslims. It is in this spirit that we are committed to uniting, even from a distance, in the celebrations surrounding the programming of events marking the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the basilica.



*Ex-voto, 8<sup>th</sup> Decembre 1938*

May we, with the help of Christ and Our Lady of Africa, sustain each other to always remain faithful to Africa and all its peoples,

Father Réal Doucet, M.Afr  
Provincial of the Americas



Our Lady of Africa, 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1872-2022).

## Journal of African Christian and Muslim Reflections

Initiator and co-founder of the recent Journal of African Christian and Muslim Reflections, Moussa Serge Traore has teamed up with his friend Omar Sillah with the aim of promoting relations between Christians and Muslims in Africa.

This new academic research magazine will allow African researchers specializing in Islamic-Christian studies in Africa to publish their articles.

The editorial board is composed of two Anglophones and two Francophones, each language having a Christian and a Muslim. The head office is located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

It is an African initiative, produced, published and printed in Africa.

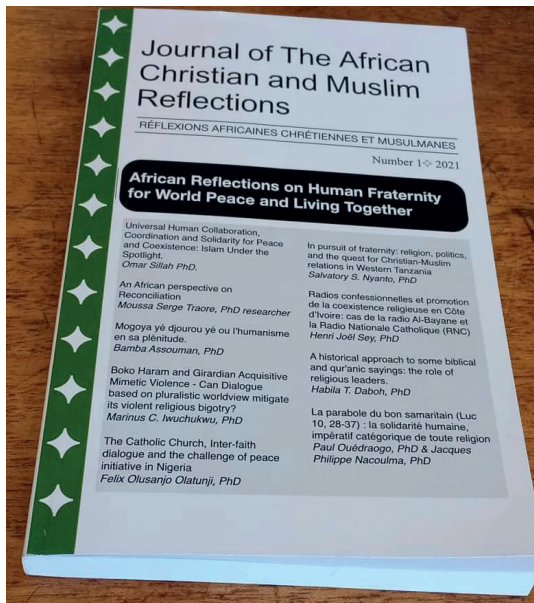
### Their message

*“Omar Sillah, a Muslim scholar from The Gambia, and Moussa Serge Traore, Missionary of Africa, are pleased to announce the publication of the first issue of the Journal of African Christian and Muslim Reflections. Ten African scholars reflect on human fraternity for peace in the world and living together. Their project is to promote African perspectives on Islamic-Christian relations in Africa.”*

### Brief presentation by Moussa Serge Traore



Member of the **Society of the Missionaries of Africa**, Moussa Serge Traore is Burkinabe. Ordained a priest in 2003, he stayed in Brazil from 2012 to 2018 where he was involved in the **Catholic University of Salvador, Bahia**. He is currently studying History at the prestigious **SOAS-School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London**.



## Protection of albinos in Bukavu

In the district of Kadutu, a slum on the outskirts of the city of Bukavu in the Democratic Republic of Congo, living conditions are precarious for all, but even more so for albinos. Their white skin pigmentation is the result of a lack of melanin. This dark pigment substance, present in the skin, hair and the eye membranes, protects from the sun's scorching rays.

Rather than the use of the word albino, many international organizations suggest the word 'amelanic' to evoke the absence of melanin. In any case, these people are very vulnerable; their vision is affected and they are often affected by skin cancer. They are also victims of traditional beliefs attributing magical powers to them. It is not uncommon for albinos, or people living with amelanism, to be killed for their organs which, according to beliefs, would bring wealth.

An association was born in Bukavu to promote their safeguarding and guarantee them a space for development. The Missionaries of Africa ask for your generosity to support this awareness and education initiative to promote the dignity of these vulnerable people. Their rights must be defended, their education and medical needs guaranteed.

The Association for the Integral Promotion of Albinos (AIPA) is committed to promoting the social rights of 70 amelanics, including 50 children who will receive academic, social and legal support.

Father Dennis Pam, M.Afr  
of the Justice and Peace Commission



Bukavu on June 14, 2021, International Albinism Awareness Day



Father Dennis Pam, M.Afr, Coordinator of the Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation Commission in the Central African Province (Burundi, Rwanda, DRC) with the members of the AIPA office in Bukavu.

Amount raised for **project number 64**, fruits of your generosity, to furnish the Gyedna Vocational School in Nigeria.

**Total of \$ 23,955**

With the thanks of Father Vigilius Kawama, M.Afr

## Our Spirituality

As Missionaries of Africa, we are invited to root our spirituality in the Word of God and openness to the Spirit to live fully the joy and challenges of the Gospel.

This pushes us to maintain a relationship with Jesus that constantly challenges us by forcing us to maintain a relational approach modeled on the Gospel.

To nurture these relationships, there must be personal and community commitment, a life of prayer and the conviction that we can only achieve them with the help and support of the brothers who form our community.

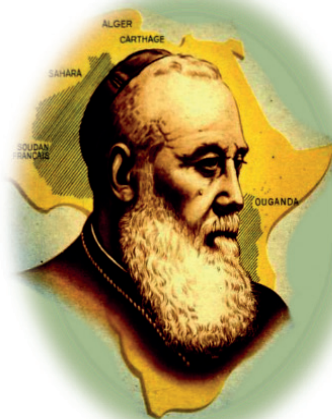
Our spiritual life is enriched by our faithfulness to the Word of God which nourishes and strengthens our relationship with Christ. It is maintained through personal and community prayer, witness for others. It is supported by spiritual accompaniment, regular renewal inspired by Ignatian spirituality and by the high points of formation that are offered to us. It is also experienced in participation in the life of the Church.

The experience of our fragility makes us discover the grace of God which leads us to reconciliation and brings serenity, strength and hope out of our struggles and our sufferings.

Our rootedness in Christ, our fidelity to his Gospel and the recognition of our fragility have profoundly transformed our spirituality to the point of making it a more radical, prophetic and joyful way of following the Christ who pushes us towards the peripheries.

This way updates our spiritual life

in our way of praying and reflecting together in the context that is ours. It also pushes us to be sensitive to the realities of today's world and to dare to constantly modify or reassess our mission.



Cardinal Lavigerie, our founder, left the Missionaries of Africa a legacy and a particular vision of living together. With Pope Francis' recent encyclical *FRATELLI TUTTI*, our intercultural communities are updating this call to be convincing and credible witnesses, as a sign of hope in a world that is tempted to create «a culture of walls» that divides through nationalism or the promotion of an ethnicity of exclusion, racism and religious fundamentalism.

## Quotes from Cardinal Lavigerie

“Undoubtedly, one must first love one's own homeland; it is the law of nature. But we must know how to rise above this law and unite all nations in the same love: it is the law of the Gospel that does not go against nature, but raises it to a higher sphere, the supernatural sphere to which God calls us.”

“You have so far, under my paternal authority, been united in one feeling and forming only one heart. This is the law I have given you: I have declared that I will not keep a single one of you who will not embrace with the same love all the members of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, to whatever nation they belong.”

## Quotes from **FRATELLI TUTTI** that inspire and encourage us to live together in an intercultural way.

“... feeling compelled to live together is one thing, appreciating the richness and beauty of the seeds of common life that must be sought and cultivated together, is another.” FT 31

“Without relationship and without contrast with the one who is different, it is difficult to understand oneself and one’s own country in a clear and complete way, since other cultures are not enemies against which one should protect oneself, but various reflections of the inexhaustible richness of human life. By looking at oneself in relation to the point of reference of the other, of the one who is different, each one can better recognize the particularities of his person and his culture: their riches, their possibilities and their limits.” FT 147

“... a healthy opening never undermines identity. Because by enriching itself with elements from elsewhere, a living culture does not simply copy or receive but integrates novelties «in its own way». This gives rise to a new synthesis that ultimately benefits everyone, because the culture from which these contributions come ends up being fed in return.” FT 148

“... no people, just like no culture or person, can get everything from itself. The others are basically necessary for the construction of a fulfilling life.” FT 150

“May the Spirit make you bridge-builders. May you contribute to growing the culture of encounter, to be at the service of a dialogue that respects differences and draws its richness from diversity.” These are the words of Pope Francis addressed to the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa during the audience of February 8, 2019.



Picture taken at the Vatican in the presence of the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionaries Sisters of Our Lady of Africa on February 8, 2019. On the picture: Stanley Lubungu, Superior General, and Pope Francis.

Note: **FRATELLI TUTTI** is an encyclical letter of Pope Francis on fraternity and social friendship published on October 3, 2020.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
**FRATELLI TUTTI**  
OF THE HOLY FATHER  
**FRANCIS**

ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP

**Relatives, benefactors and friends, if you wish to help  
the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers);**

- ∞ with a donation for a specific project (see page 11)
- ∞ with a donation for the works of the White Fathers, in general
- ∞ by investing money with a lifetime annuity
- ∞ with gifts and bequests by will
- ∞ by a contribution to the formation of young missionaries
- ∞ with a donation or gift of publicly traded securities

You can use page 15 of this *Letter to our Friends*, fill it out according to your intentions, cut it out and send it to us with the return envelope to one of our addresses below.

You can also go to our website [www.mafr.net](http://www.mafr.net) to make a donation online safely. You can also go and meet a missionary at one of our houses.

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**Policy of the Missionaries of Africa for  
the projects that appear in the Letter to our Friends:**

- 1- All the projects that appear in the Letter to Friends  
are exclusively for Africa.**
- 2- All the money received goes to Africa.**
- 3- A Missionary from Africa supervises all projects.**



(Cut out and insert in return envelope)

## I wish to help the Missionaries of Africa

For an **ONLINE DONATION**

Donation .....\$ for project no. 66 (See page 11)

Gift .....\$ for the Missionaries of Africa

*A donation of \$10 or more allows you to receive a receipt for tax use.*

### Other ways to assist the Mission:

#### • Investments with a lifetime annuity

- If you are 60 years of age or older, you can invest your money in the “Investments with a Lifetime Annuity” of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers). This pension is guaranteed for life and offers a rate that varies according to the life expectancy rate.

- You will receive a receipt for tax use for at least 20% of the amount paid. Only a small portion of the payments you receive could be taxable.

#### • Gifts and bequests in your will

“Sacrifice your money for a brother and a friend, let it not rust in pure loss under a stone” (Book of Ecclesiasticus 29,10).

#### • Scholarships for our 500 Missionary of Africa candidates

- A scholarship for one year of training: \$1,700

- A scholarship for three years of training: \$5,000

I attach a check to the order of the Missionaries of Africa.



I prefer to pay by credit card (tick the card).



Name and surname: .....

Card No.: .....your CVV \_ \_ \_

Expiry: ..... Signature:.....

#### • Donation of listed securities

- A tax-efficient way to make a donation.

N.B.: If you do not receive this Letter to Friends, apply for it and you will receive it free of charge, four times a year, in addition to the calendar.

Your first and last name: .....

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1640 St-Hubert Street  
Montréal QC H2L 3Z3  
Telephone: 514 849-1167 ext. 111

## Sincere thanks!

“Keep Africa in mind!”

<https://mafr.net>



**Proverb**

*Washing a monkey's head is wasting soap.  
(Congo)*

**Meaning**

*There are efforts that are not worth it.*



**Provincial House**  
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