

Mission Letter

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)

November 2016

Dear friends of the Missions,

On the first day of each year, the catholic faithful read this beautiful text, taken from the Bible: "May God bless you and keep you. May He let his face shine on you and be gracious to you. May He uncover his face and bring you peace". These very nice words speak of love, happiness, mercy.



All of us, missionaries and their relatives, friends and benefactors, wish similar blessings on the first day of the year. But are these words and blessings put into practice, the whole year through? Missionaries try to live out these blessings when facing the difficulties many Africans have to go through, when they are refugees, uprooted, seeking a safer place for themselves and their children. Many of our missionaries work in refugee camps, or in slums, trying to put into practice the New Year wishes. Refugees need not only food, clothing, medicines and work, but also a loving presence and respect of their dignity as human beings.

We also read in the Bible the following words: "At various times in the past and in various ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but, in our own time, he has spoken to us through his Son...who is the radiant light of God's glory". For ages, God seemed to be speechless. Though "he spoke to our ancestors through prophets", he actually made his name known through his deeds and marvels. At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the radiant Son of God. From that birth onwards, God is not speechless anymore, for Jesus is the Word of God, committing himself for our fully human and divine well-being. This is what missionaries like you and us believe and proclaim. "The Word was made flesh" (John 1,14).

When we gather together at the beginning of a new year, we wish to each other words of blessings: peace be upon you, upon our world, may you enjoy a healthy year, may happiness dwell deep in your hearts. But more than that, we commit ourselves for the welfare of each person, having each African at heart, be they in Africa or even here in Canada. With Jesus and through him, the speechless God speaks clearly and loudly. At

times, the speech is nothing else but the tear or the smile of a new-born baby. At times, it is a kind of teaching or a presence which is full of life-giving love. A loving presence speaks louder than speeches. "To have seen me is to have seen the Father", said Jesus. Look at Jesus, in the crib or even on the cross: this is God's love, this is God's face shining on us.

The Missionaries of Africa, at Christmas time, pray for you, asking God to bless each of you and let his radiant face shine on you. They wish you a very happy Christmas and a wonderful new year.

Fr Gilles Barrette, M. Afr.

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Superior of the Missionaries of Africa in the Americas

