Mission Letter

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

June 2019
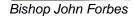
Dear friends of the Missions,

The 150th anniversary celebration of the foundation of the society of the Missionaries of Africa and the congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa began on the 8th of December 2018. This coincided with the beatification of the 19 martyrs of Algeria (included in this group were 4 White Fathers) in Oran Algeria, the country in which Cardinal Lavigerie founded our two communities.

During this period (1869-2019) 649 Canadians joined the society of Missionaries of Africa as priests and brothers. The first member was **John Forbes** who joined the novitiate in Algiers on the 3rd September 1886. He later became a bishop in Uganda. Today there are still 108 Canadian members.

Bishop John Forbes

The first Canadian to join the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa was **Caroline de Sève** in 1883. From Montreal, she practiced her mission in Tunisia before leaving the Congregation in 1894 to join a contemplative order. The White Sisters remind more of **Adélaïde Morin**, of St-Norbert, Arthabaska, QC, who joined their Congregation in 1885. She died in Algiers, North Africa, at the age of 70.
In 1966 there were 346 Canadians in their congregation, out of a total of 2,165. Today there are now 110 Canadian members.

Sister Adélaïde Morin

On the 8th of February 2019 the leadership teams of both communities met with Pope Francis in Rome. Here is a summary of what the Holy Father said.

"Thank you for the service of the mission of the Church lived with passion and generosity, in fidelity to the evangelical insights of your common founder, Cardinal Lavigerie." "He had in his heart the passion for the Gospel and that the desire that it be proclaimed to all. For this reason your roots are marked by Mission ad extra; it is in your DNA. You know that the proclamation of the Gospel is not synonymous with proselytism; it is this dynamic that leads us to be close to others, to share with them the gift received, the encounter of love that changed your life and has led you to choose to consecrate your life to the Lord Jesus. I encourage you to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, so that you never forget that the true missionary is first and foremost a disciple."

"May this Jubilee Year also contribute to the development of fraternal bonds between you, because the proclamation of the Gospel can only be lived at the price of true missionary

communion. With the strength of the Holy Spirit, be witnesses to this hope which does not disappoint (Rm 5, 5).

"May the Holy Spirit make you build bridges between people. Where the Lord has sent you, contribute to the growth of a culture of encounter; continue to be servants of a dialogue that, while respecting differences, knows how to be enriched by the difference of others. And I thank you in particular for the work you have already done in the service of dialogue with Islam, with our Muslim sisters and brothers. Through the style and simplicity of your lifestyle, you also demonstrate the need to take care of our common home, the land. Finally, in the wake of Cardinal Lavigerie, be sowers of hope, fighting against all current forms of slavery. Always seek to be close to the small and the poor, to those who expect, at the periphery of our societies, to be recognized in their dignity, to be welcomed, protected, raised, accompanied, promoted and integrated."

Pope Francis congratulated our two Superiors General, Sister Carmen Sammut and Father Stanley Lubungo, thanking the Missionaries of Africa for their service of the mission of the Church lived with passion and generosity.

During our celebrations we also remember the great number of Canadian friends and benefactors who have been supporting us by their prayers and gifts. Our Canadian membership may be ageing but we rejoice for the growing number of vocations in Africa. We continue to count on your support and assistance.

Fr. Mike Merizzi M.Afr.