

# Missionaries of Africa

White  
Fathers



# Would you dare an encounter with Africans “in the style of Jesus”?

**A journey 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 150 years, their aim is to commit themselves by words and actions 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 500 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 an encounter with Africans in “the style of Jesus”.

For more information, you can contact Father Serge St-Arneault:

E-mail: [sergestarno@gmail.com](mailto:sergestarno@gmail.com)

Telephone: (1) 514 849 1167 # 217

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.mafn.net](http://www.mafn.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.mafrome.org](http://www.mafrome.org)

And also our Websites in Spain, France, Great-Britain, Belgium, Italy, Burkina-Faso...



## Thank you to Father Michel Fortin



After 30 years of service, first to the *Magazine Mission*, then to the bulletin called *Letter to our friends*, Michel Fortin hands down the torch. I want to express my thanks for his perseverance and his desire to offer a positive content of quality about Africa and the work of the Missionaries of Africa. You will recall his many pages with a spiritual content: they will be missed. Michel will continue, with his fervour and convictions to communicate his reflections on Facebook. Good continuation on your mission. Yes, thank you, Michel.



It is a new team of three confreres who will succeed to Father Michel. It will be Father Marc Beaudry, archivist at our house in Montreal, Father Serge St-Arneault, the new director of the Afrika Center, and Father Jacques Poirier, the present Provincial Secretary of the Americas. I thank them for having so generously accepted to take the relay. Together, faithful to our tradition of information, they will present articles about Africa, the witnesses of the mission, and ask for your help on development projects in Africa.

Thank you once more to these confreres. Yes, we are very much alive. Your prayer, your friendship and your care make you participants of our mission. We must not forget Africa.

Gilles Barrette, M.Afr.  
Provincial of the Americas



From left to right : Marc Beaudry, Jacques Poirier and Serge St-Arneault. E-mail: [medias@mafr.net](mailto:medias@mafr.net)

## The passionate life of a young missionary

We share with you this interesting article of a young missionary Father Paul Reilly from the United States, a missionary of Africa, ordained in 2015. The Society sent him in Ethiopia, at Adigrat, to look after the Center for Youth Development, called Bruh Tesfa.

“You should not ask questions, only the Protestants can ask questions.” This is the answer that one of our students at Bruh Tesfa received from an orthodox priest in his village, when he dared to lift up his hand to ask a question concerning his faith. Indeed, it is quite easy to see today how young people are curious. With unlimited information always accessible on their “smartphones”, even in faraway places in Africa, the young people of today are eager to increase their knowledge. This is something that we observe and encourage every day at our Center Bruh Tesfa for Youth Development.

### Mission

Situated in the diocese of Adigrat and inaugurated in 2006 by the Missionaries of Africa, Bruh Tesfa aims at being, for the impoverished Youth of Adigrat, a “Shining Hope”: as this name means in tigrine, the local language of this Northern Province of Ethiopia. The Centre Bruh Tesfa offers a wide variety of educational and recreational activities, including sport, lessons in English and French, and activities in environmental awareness. It also looks after two homes for young people (one for boys and one for girls). These two homes provide food and clothing, medical care, school material, and “counselling” services, for twenty-seven students, coming from poor rural



Paul Reilly the day he was ordained a deacon in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in 2014.

families, during their last year of High School. Twenty-eight young women are also assisted in college and university. Roughly, aiming at transforming the life of the young people of Adigrat through a holistic education, Bruh Tesfa reaches the life of almost 500 young people and their families in a direct or indirect way, if we consider the positive impact that represents an educated and salaried child in a poor family. Last year, we were very proud to congratulate nine female students who had completed their studies, while receiving a university degree. We hope that they will become productive members of the Ethiopian society, in a short while.

### A Small Catholic Island

It is true, most of the social ministry that we provide at Bruh Tesfa could be done by Non-Governmental Organisations. However, as Missionaries

of Africa, we must never lose sight that there ought to be a certain advantage of our presence at Adigrat.

For me, this advantage, is shown in the ecumenical aspect of our ministry. Nearly 98% of the young people coming to our Center belong to the Orthodox Church. Indeed, we are a small island of Catholics amid a sea of devoted orthodox worshippers. Yet this reality does not bother us. Given the religious background of most of our students, we consider as our duty, as Christian brothers, to create positive and solid links with our orthodox neighbours, especially with their pastors.

While we are trying to create a secure and family like environment in which the young people can grow as individuals, we do recognize also that a Christian cannot consider himself truly developed as long as his faith has not deepened to the extent that it becomes central in his life. Thus, we work seriously with the orthodox clergy in order to strengthen the faith of the youth belonging to that Church.

### **Christian Formation of Youth**

We try hard as much as possible to promote positive ecumenical relations between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia through the religious formation of our young people of Bruh Tesfa. For example, our twenty-seven students at the Centre are accompanied by an orthodox priest all along their academic year. This priest becomes their spiritual father and remains available for each student. Furthermore, twice a month, we invite a member of the orthodox clergy to present a spiritual topic to our students.



**Paul with students of Bruh Tesfa Home in Ethiopia.**

During these sessions of Christian formation, we encourage the students to ask questions concerning the faith handed over by their ancestors, of which they know so little. The priest teaches them the literal meaning of the prayers in “gueze” (being the liturgical language of the Ethiopian Church), together with the reasons behind so many liturgical traditions and the religious practices that govern the life of an orthodox Christian in Ethiopia.

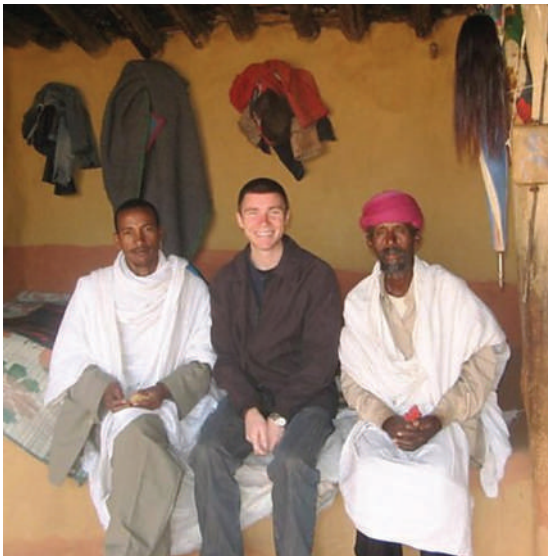
At the same time, we give them a Bible in tigrine, which allows them to read the Word of God in their maternal language and to be able to pray during their free time. All these initiatives are done in collaboration with our orthodox brothers. I can assure you that the parents of our students together with the orthodox clergy are very grateful to us. Our desire is not only in helping the young people to grow in their Christian faith, but also in encouraging their own pastors to supervise that formation.



## Formation of the Clergy

Another initiative originating from the Missionaries of Africa in Adigrat is a program of continued formation for the orthodox clergy of our neighbourhood. The aim of this program is to offer to the orthodox priests and deacons the possibility of updating their knowledge on the level of the Bible, the doctrine of the Church, Canon Law, moral and pastoral theology. The sad reality is that most of the orthodox priests and deacons in Ethiopia do not receive any special formation, as it is normally done at the Seminary before the ordination.

Their knowledge of theology remains very limited. Because of this lack of formation, a large number of the clergy cannot follow the speedy rhythm of changes in a modern society. Thus, when new topics in the pastoral field appear with which they are not familiar, or when a youth ask a question for which they have no answer, their tendency is to be on the defensive



**Paul visiting two Ethiopians.**



**Spiritual conference given by Paul and an orthodox priest to the students of Bruh Tesfa.**

side so as to hide their ignorance. In these situations, young people are often dissuaded from asking further questions concerning their faith for fear of being accused of maintaining Protestant tendencies.

However, whenever more and more young people are educated and discover the importance of widening their knowledge, the inability of the orthodox clergy to produce intelligent answers could lead them to abandon the Church in favour of other ecclesial communities. The program of continued formation by the Missionaries of Africa is meant to make up for this lack of theological formation. These classes offer the opportunity to the teachers of the Orthodox Church to be in charge of these sessions of formation through which the 108 participants seek to be better equipped when facing new challenges, and answering pastoral questions concerning the youth. Again, our orthodox brothers appreciate our way, discreet yet crucial, of fostering the program.

## Churches-Sisters

In all the activities at Bruh Tesfa, we endeavour to create a family atmosphere, where people of different cultures, faith and level of social economy, can find a place. For sure, as Catholics, we represent the minority and also as foreigners, we are guests in this country where the Christian faith took root some 1600 years ago. Because of that, the ecumenical implications of our social ministry are always present in our minds. Thus, we make a contribution in helping sixty-one extremely poor families living around our house.

With the help of two respected orthodox priests, we make sure that the most impoverished people (the aged, the sick, the unemployed persons, etc.) receive a little financial help four times a year. This limited help allows them to buy the necessary goods as food and clothes for their families during a few months.

Moreover, each year, on the occasion of the feast of Our Lady of the Assumption, we organize a big fraternal meal with the orthodox clergy. Normally, the Bishop (Eparque) of Adigrat, Bishop Tesfaselassie Medhin participates with some Catholic priests of the diocese. This feast is a marvellous occasion for our bishop to share bread with nearly one hundred orthodox clerics (priests). It is also an opportunity to be able to listen to them and evaluate our relationship between the Catholics and the Orthodox in the diocese. It is always a well-expected event in promoting an open dialogue between the two sisters-churches, at the local level.



Paul with an orthodox Priest.

## Faith in Jesus

In fact, at Bruh Tesfa, we never forget that our Mission is to be a shining hope to the Youth of Adigrat. This implies promoting their development at all levels: body, spirit and soul. If we take our desire seriously to deepen our faith in Jesus, we must absolutely work in close collaboration with our orthodox brothers. Besides, Pope Francis expressed it very well to the Patriarch of the Orthodox Ethiopian Church, Matthias, when he visited Rome at the beginning of 2016: “We are brothers and sisters in Christ. (...) What unites us is greater than what divides us” From this firm conviction derives all the ecumenical dynamism and all the missionary activities. And we can testify that at Adigrat, the Christians both Catholic and orthodox live and grow in harmony, perhaps thanks to our missionary presence. Our prayers accompany you in this most important apostolate.

Paul Reilly, M.Afr  
Director of the Youth Development Center  
Bruh Tesfa, Adigrat, Ethiopia

## Project No 49 - To equip a library at the Youth Center of Mahagi, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



Youth Center of *Bishop Marcel Utambi* – Mahagi, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The context of Mahagi is that of an extreme poverty. Intellectual formation among the youths is really faced with difficulties. We have 1 university, 4 tertiary institutions and 16 secondary schools.

We have schools, institutions and a Catholic university for intellectual formation but without any good library. This has a lot of consequences among the youths and students:

1. The inability of teachers to find back-ups for their courses.

2. Many teachers teach the same materials for years and years without any updates due to lack of books.

3. Books are recommended in schools

and institutions but students cannot afford to buy them because of lack of financial support and poverty.

4. Students who finish their studies and have to write a thesis at the end of their studies do not finish or they pay people to write for them about 300 km from Mahagi where you can find a good library at the capital.

5. The spirit of research and scientific studies is really lost because there are no books to read.

6. We have lost the culture of reading in Mahagi due to the fact that there are no books or they are very expensive.

7. Even professors don't know how to use the libraries for research because they are not used to visiting libraries.

8. We have students who are really good, who want to further their studies but complaining of libraries and lack of books.



University students following a lesson on scientific methodology.





**Part of the actual library. There is a lack of many recent books in order to be really efficient.**

Taking into consideration the poverty of this area, after considering the fact that we need to contribute as M.Afr. to the intellectual, spiritual and sociocultural formation of these youths, the Missionaries of Africa in partnership with the Local church of Mahagi catholic diocese have opened a youth centre built with the help of Manos Unidas in Spain. In this youth center there is a new and only library of Mahagi to foster intellectual formation and facilitate scientific research and readings in schools and among youths. We have even started some study groups to help redeem the spirit of reading among youths. But how can we foster the culture of reading without books and other intellectual materials?

However, we are still faced with challenges of buying books for our library. We have already 5000 books for secondary and university of Mahagi but many of them are old theological and spiritual books left by our missionaries. Today profs, student researchers give us lists of recommended books to buy, but we are limited. We don't have the financial support we need to buy these books. This is why we want to apply for financial help from you to equip our library with school books.

This is our first target. The second will be information technology (Making scientific researches through the use of technology (computers).

We thank you for your contribution in fostering the intellectual formation of the Youth of Mahagi.

Peter Ekutt, M.Afr.



**Father Peter Ekutt is in charge of the Youth Center of Mahagi. He is also involved in some pastoral work in the local jail, gives sessions to the Youth and to the Catholic teachers of Mahagi. At times he is invited to help the pastoral team of the Cathedral Parish.**

## **The Missionaries of Africa have 150 years**

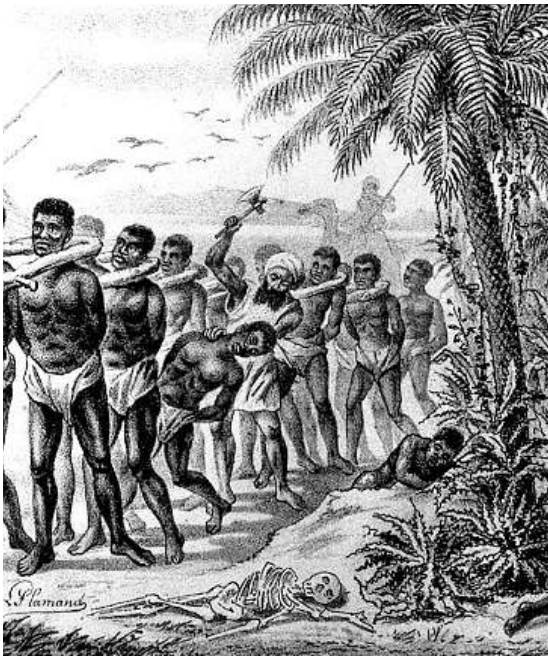
In 2019, the Missionaries of Africa (Priests, Brothers and Sisters) will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their foundation. The 2018 calendar will remind it to you, each month, with the number 150. In this article, the Letter to our Friends wishes to make you participate in our joy and vocation.

### **Looking at our past with gratitude**

As Missionaries of Africa, we are proud of our past because God has helped us to mark in a lasting manner the future of the proclamation of the Gospel in the African world. Our founder, Bishop Charles Lavigerie, arrived in Algiers as the new bishop, in 1866. He felt the urgent need to offer to Algerians a humanitarian assistance to the victims of famine and epidemics. When the political authorities



**Charles Lavigerie, Founder of the Missionaries of Africa, White Fathers and White Sisters.**



**In those days, the african Continent was under a severe disease which is slavery.**

reproached him to take care of the Algerians, Lavigerie had this wonderful answer: “You cannot prevent me from loving them as a father.” But he must find some staff to help the victims.

Slowly, in his mind, grows up the idea to go beyond the geographical frame of Algeria, in order to offer a valuable service to the whole continent of Africa, suffering from the scourge of slavery. To face these challenges, Lavigerie thinks about gathering a group of heralds of the gospel (both men and women) who will consecrate themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel to the men and women of the African world. Strongly attached to Christ, these missionaries would leave their family, their country, their culture, their way of life, to go and live in a loving closeness with the Africans. They would enter into

their daily lives, learning their language, discovering their beautiful culture, being compassionate to their sufferings and sharing their hopes. In 1868, for the White Fathers, in 1869, for the White Sisters, was the beginning of an ecclesial adventure that is still producing abundant fruits. The first missionaries, coming from France will soon be joined by others coming from elsewhere: all of them living among themselves an “esprit de corps”, far beyond the barriers of nationalities.

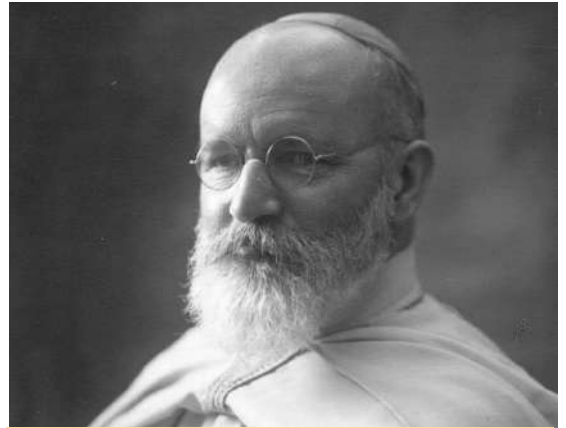
### **Consecrating one’s life to the apostolate in a mission country**

During the years 1875, this new idea begins to spread in the Province of Quebec. At that time, Bishop Lavigerie sends some White Fathers to speak about his African missionary project. Two White Sisters also came in 1884 to talk about their mission in Algeria.

In 1885, one Canadian, Adélaïde Morin, joins the White Sisters in Algiers. Born on January 6, 1864 at St-Norbert of Arthabaska (Diocese of Quebec), she becomes a novice in 1886, and takes the



**Sister Marie-Salomé, co-fonder of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa.**



**Bishop John Forbes, the first Canadian to become a White Father.**

name of Sister Marie-Bernard. We find her in various missions of the White Sisters in Algeria, and even in Paris. Above all, she has worked in dispensaries, and Training Centers for women. She was 70 years of age when she died in Algiers on March 28, 1934, regretted by so many young girls and women who had benefited of her active presence.

A young Canadian, John Forbes, born on January 10, 1864, on Ile Perrot (diocese of Montreal) reads an article in the Bulletin of the African Missions from France about the martyrdom of two White Fathers in Burundi. Being a student at the Major Seminary in Montreal, he decides to join this missionary group. Accepted, he leaves Canada in August 1886, for Algiers, to do his novitiate and complete his theological studies. He takes his final commitment on September 25, 1888, and becomes a priest the following October 6. After Jerusalem, as a missionary, he comes to Canada in 1901 to open in Quebec City, the first house of the White Fathers in the Americas, before fulfilling his dream in black Africa. He arrives in Uganda in 1914. In 1918 he is





**The Missionaries leaving in all directions of the African continent.**

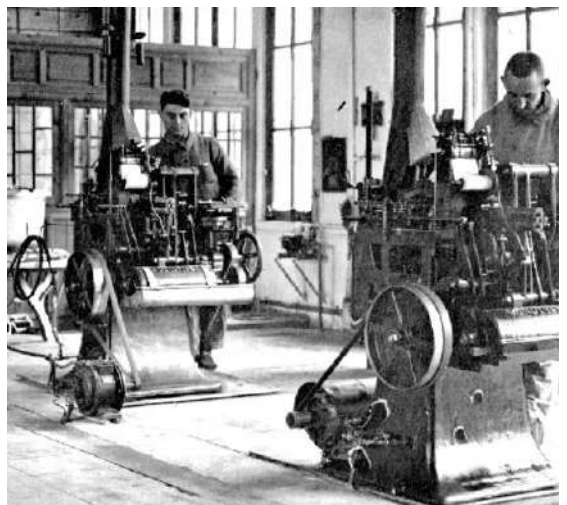
consecrated bishop, and falls sick in 1925. He goes to our infirmary at our house in Billère (France) where he dies on March 13, 1926, at the age of 62.

It is worth mentioning that the first Canadian White Father to die in Africa is Father Eugène Beauchamp, from Saint-Jerome, near Terrebonne. He had received his training as a White Father in North Africa, where he had been ordained as a priest. After 14 months in the missions in Uganda, he succumbed to the black fever on November 6, 1903, at the age of 30, in Rubaga where he was buried.

The White Fathers and the White Sisters have worked in partnership with various religious congregations of men and women, for the evangelization. In the independent African countries in the sixties, we can certify that everywhere the local Church was well established. The White Fathers have created and worked in many Junior and Major Seminaries, the number of priests is important, most of the dioceses have a bishop born in the country.

The quality and the vitality of the local Churches that they have founded is a

testimony to the seriousness of their work. Both White Fathers and White Sisters have opened University Training Centers, as well as Training Centers for the laity being competent, and being capable of preparing and participating in the social and economical future of their country. The White Sisters have trained the staff of 22 religious congregations for women who have taken the relay for the schooling of the children and young people, medical care and medical research, as well as pastoral care in the parishes. Secondary and technical schools allowed the training of a great number of persons who continue today to take an important role in the development of their country, including the setting up of printing presses. The missionaries have prepared dictionaries, grammars; they have launched newspapers, organized groups of Catholic actions; they were very much involved in development projects, while training a competent staff. In all the countries where they have worked, the missionary dimension of the Church has taken a great deal of importance.



**Printing House in Maison-Carrée, Algeria, founded by the Missionnaires of Africa.**

## Living our vocation with passion

Today, we rejoice because the Africans, in great number, have become missionaries outside their own country. And in all the continents, the M.Afr. and the SMNDA are at present in 22 African countries and in 18 countries outside Africa. They are originating from more than forty countries. For both congregations, there are at present 500 young people in training. The needs are great. Many bishops from Europe, the Americas or Africa wish the coming of our missionaries to launch new projects or to support the commitments that the local Churches can no longer sustain.

As they have always done, it is with passion that the missionaries work: their passion for Jesus-Christ does not fail, their passion for the people of the African world does not cease to grow. They have loved everything of Africa.

### Mission lived in a different way

We must say very clearly that the missionaries have to live their vocation in a different way, particularly today, and still with passion. We are closer and closer to the African world already present in our western countries: let us simply think about the ever-growing number of Africans coming to Canada to find a better future for themselves and their children. New missions have been launched: parish services in places where immigration is predominant, greater involvement in the care of migrants and local people, etc. Reception centers and social services have been set up for Africans wanting to feel at home with us. In Montreal, the Afrika Center of the White Fathers tries to answer these needs.

Let us not forget the numerous helpers, these voluntary persons who have sustained



**Sister Bibiane, specialised in eyes operation, student of Father Goarnisson in Burkina Faso.**

the missionary work, and to this day are still involved. The missionary passion has reached their hearts and they continue with much courage to witness in our society and in our Church to the mission all baptized people are invited to participate. Some “retired” missionaries give language courses to newly arrived persons, pay visits to isolated or handicapped people, involve themselves freely in many associations helping Africans to be integrated.

I often hear this question: at what age does a missionary can retire? But how can love getting retired? There are always some people to meet, to help, to visit, to encourage, to listen, to love, to whom a presence is necessary, for whom a prayer is possible, for whom our sufferings can be offered.

### Looking to the future with confidence

The missionary does not give up. He adapts himself. He looks at the future with boldness, realism and confidence. He is able of creativity where he has been called to flourish and bear fruits. Prepared to meet the Muslim world, I myself have taken part in various celebrations and meetings, and I have put myself at the disposal of the

pastoral services in the diocese of Montreal, since many Muslims call to the Church for various services, in terms of material help, or mixed marriages, religious training for their children, and so far as asking for baptism from persons coming from Islam.

## Slavery today here at home

In Canada, since a few months, many “migrants” are flowing in: they are invited by our governments because of their professional skills needed in our country, they flee their countries of origin, in which their living conditions and the perspective for the future have become difficult, almost unbearable. They cross our borders legally or not, they risk their lives while crossing the seas, some are sold or bought by new masters for the service for which they were hired. Unfortunately, this is a new era for slavery.

The missionaries cannot remain indifferent to this situation, today. They want to help the African migrants during their integration in our country or elsewhere outside Africa. Let us not forget that this migration also exists on the African continent. Many persons have been obliged to exile themselves, inside their own country or in a neighbouring country because some “foreigners” with the consent of the local leaders, snatch their land, then expel them, in order to exploit the minerals. Other Africans who cannot find work at home, are forced to find refuge in the big cities; or go and increase the ranks of migrants in other African countries.

Deep in the heart of a missionary, rings out the call of proclaiming Jesus-Christ, to be at least his witness. For a missionary, to evangelize, means making a person more human, and getting to know the wide dimension of love and reaching



**Burundian refugees waiting a ferryboat to go to Tanzania.**

the stature of the perfect human being, reaching all the fullness of God, as it is written by Saint Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (3, 14-19)

## Mission is not over

Mission accomplished? Certainly not, since it is always in the making. The missionary has to lead other believers on the same road of collaboration to the work of God. You, who are reading these lines, may feel that perhaps you hear a call to be involved in your own environment, to make your contribution so that every “foreigner” may be welcomed and be able to find a future life, made of smiles and happiness. It would be a way among many others, to receive something of the missionary heritage handed down by the missionaries.

Mission is not over. It comes under new visions and calls for newly adapted answers, a renewed involvement. But always with a passion for Jesus, with a passion for all human beings and for his full and harmonious development.

Gilles Barette, M.Afr.





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

# I wish to help the Missionaries of Africa

(For an **ONLINE DONATION**: [www.mafr.net](http://www.mafr.net) > Online Donation)

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

Donation .....\$ for Project No 49 (CF page 8)

*For a donation of \$10 or more, you will receive a receipt for tax purposes.*

## Other ways of helping the Mission:

### • Life annuity investments

- *I you are 60 or over, you can put your money into the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) Life annuity investment. This annuity is guaranteed for life and offers a varying rate according to the life expectancy.*

- *You will receive a tax receipt for at least 20% of the sum paid. Only a small part of the payments you receive could be liable for tax.*

### • Bequest and legacies

- *“Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend, and do not let it rust under a stone and be lost. .” (Si. 29:10)*

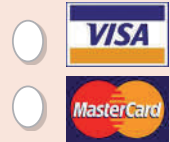
### • Bursaries for our 500 Missionary of Africa candidates

- *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 number:.....your CVV.....

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

### • Gift of publicly traded securities

- *You will receive a charitable donation receipt.*

**N.B.:** *If you do not receive this newsletter “Letter to our friends”, on request it will be sent to you free of charge, once a year, as well as a calendar.*

Postal address:.....

.....

Email:.....

Telephone:.....

# Thank you!

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

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