

LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS N° 19 MARCH 2024

Missionaries of Africa

White
Fathers





The mission of the Missionaries of Africa is closely linked to issues of peace and social justice and intercultural and ecumenical dialogue. Our involvement in all these areas is evident in our pastoral commitments in parishes and in our specialized centres, particularly on the African continent. In the name of Gospel values, we also campaign against modern forms of slavery.

We live in intercultural communities reflecting an increasingly universal world. The Missionaries of Africa number about 1,200 members, priests, brothers and lay associates, from 36 different nationalities. Our houses of formation welcome more than 500 young people from different African countries, India, the Philippines and Mexico.

For more information, contact the Missionaries of Africa according to your region. See the list on page 14. You can also reach us by email at

The Missionaries of Africa on the Internet



Canadian site: www.mafr.net



Site of the Afrika Center in Montreal:
www.centreafrika.com/web



US site in Washington:
www.missionariesofafrica.org



International site in Rome:
<https://mafrome.org/home/>



Mexican site in Guadalajara, Mexico:
www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx/



Missionary Sisters of Our Lady
of Africa in Rome: www.msolafrica.org/

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Bearing fruit (Gospel of Mark, 4:1-20)

As a teenager, I was strongly captivated by a passage in Mark's Gospel (4:1-20) where Jesus addresses the crowd gathered by the lake. What does he say? Although he's sitting in a boat, he's not talking about fishing, but about seeds that have fallen into the ground. Only those that have fallen into good soil produce abundant fruit.

This seed, he explained to his disciples, is the Word sown in hearts. In today's edition of the magazine, we read some wonderful examples of successful sowing even on impoverished soil.

The first example is a new centre dedicated to helping missionaries who have been through a lot. It's called Bethany Centre, and it's located in the high Maasai Mountains in Kenya. Psychotherapists are on hand to help them heal after a traumatic experience. Concerned about their environment, they also invest their energies in planting trees and helping Maasai women who have to carry their water in heavy containers.

As you read through the magazine, you'll discover the moving testimony of a young missionary who was kidnapped, and that of an older confrere to whom the Lord converted trials into consolation.

The Word of God has also found good soil in the heart of Rudy, a young Mexican who aspires to become a missionary in Africa. For the moment, he's struggling to learn French.



*Serge St-Arneault,
M.Afr*

In the end, you'll see that Afrika Centre reaped the rewards of 2023. A large crowd celebrated the first anniversary of its reopening. Joy, dancing and a well-stocked table were the order of the day. We give thanks to God for all this beautiful and good fruit, the work of the faith that animates us in Christ.

Missionaries of Africa's Bethany Centre in Kenya

Located in the Maasai Mountains at an altitude of 2,000 meters, some 50 kilometers from Kenya's capital Nairobi, the Bethany Centre for Missionaries of Africa has opened its doors to offer psychological care and spiritual accompaniment to missionaries, priests and religious who have lived through traumatic experiences or are facing mental health challenges such as depression, exhaustion, anxiety or addictions. Human frailty is the same for everyone!

In 2011, a favorable opportunity arose to acquire a house in Olchoro Onyore in Kenya's Maasai country. An initial team laid the foundations for this new mission. But it was not until the arrival of a team of professionals in 2022 that the house was opened for its intended mission.

A team of four confreres now oversees a range of activities including psycho-educational support, a self-growth pathway, meditation sessions and sports activities.

The team is made up of Father François Xavier Bigeziki (75) from Rwanda, a psychotherapist; Brother Patrick Norah (65) from Ghana, a spiritual guide and bursar; Father Stéphane Joulain (57) from France, a psychotherapist and clinical director of the center; and Father Sébastien Kalengwe from Congo (DRC), trained in counseling and spiritual guidance.

The team is international and intercultural. All the members of this team share the daily lives of the participants who attend the sessions. Three of these confreres have links with Canada: Father Bigeziki did part of his training in Ottawa, Father Kalengwe lived and studied in Montreal and Sherbrooke, and Father Joulain lived in Quebec City and several years in Ottawa. Today, he still teaches online at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, where he did his doctorate.

The Bethany environment

The Bethany Centre is located in an exceptional environment in the Maasai mountains. However, its remote location presents a number of challenges: access to water, electricity, transport, etc. Being twelve kilometers from the tarmac road and fifteen kilometers from the nearest town, it presents major challenges during the rainy season. These inconveniences are shared by the Maasai population among whom we live.

The three psychotherapists are accredited by the Kenyan Counseling and Psychological Association (KCPA). The Kenyan government recognizes their competence as psychotherapists. Brother Patrick is also a member of the Kenyan Association of Spiritual Advisors.

The centre's team is also supervised by the president of the Kenyan Association of Rehabilitation Centres. These approvals and supervisions are a guarantee of the quality of service offered to our clients. We have also built up a network of relationships with other professional centres and numerous mental health professionals, enabling us to offer the best possible service at all times.

We are also working with the national prison chaplaincy on a project to support incarcerated minors. There are three centres housing a total of almost 300 young people aged 12 to 17, but very few support services are offered to them. So, together with a permanent deacon and father of three, we're building a project to make up for this shortfall, and also to train the staff involved.



Logo of the Bethany Centre



Stéphane Joulain, M.Afr



Missionaries of Africa (M.Afr) Bethany Centre in Kenya.



The team of M.Afr therapists from the Bethany Centre among the Massai in Kenya: Stéphane Joulain, Sébastien Kalengwe, Patrick Norah and François Xavier Bigeziki.

Testimony of Father Paul Sanogo

A Malian national, I was ordained a priest in Mali in July 2022 and sent on mission to Nigeria in the Diocese of Minna, more precisely to the parish of Saint-Luc in the village of Gyedna.

Terrorist attacks and looting by armed gangs are frequent. Many priests and lay people are kidnapped. This was my case for 21 days in August 2023. A young Tanzanian intern, Dominic Merikiōri Mahinini, was also taken captive by bandits.

The attack took place just before midnight. After death threats, we were forced to accompany them into the forest. In fact, we had become their slaves and were regularly beaten. This went on for three weeks.

I'm enormously grateful for the care and support I've received at Bethany. It's a secluded place, but it's also a place where we can take time out and work through our traumatic experiences.

The quality of the confrères' hospitality and their skills helped me a lot. It was an extraordinary seven weeks, during which I had the chance to discover unsuspected sources of my personality. I had to deepen the scope of my emotions, my spiritual life and my interpersonal relationships. I'm full of hope. I feel renewed and ready to continue Christ's mission wherever I am sent again.

A huge thank you to Bethany Centre for giving me this time to heal and draw the positive from this kidnapping experience.

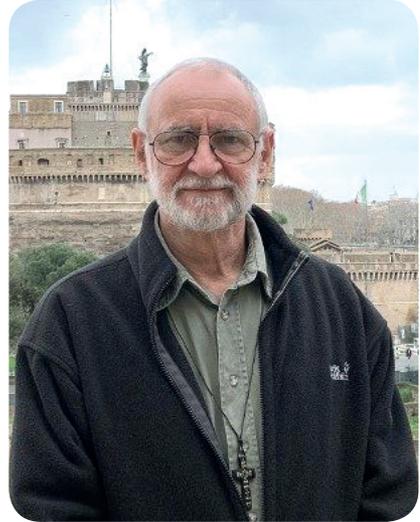


Paul Sanogo, M.Afr

Release of Father Hans-Joachim Lohre (Ha-Jo)

Last year we invited you to pray for the release of Father Hans-Joachim Lohre, who had been kidnapped in Mali. Your prayers were answered. Ha-Jo was released on November 26, 2023 after 371 days in captivity. Fortunately, he was well treated by his al-Qaeda captors.

Father Ha-Jo thanks all those who prayed so fervently for him: «*I never felt abandoned,*» he says, «*and I was never afraid. I know I don't owe this to my small faith, but it's thanks to you, thanks to your prayers, that the Lord has converted my trials into consolation.*»



Hans-Joachim Lohre. M.Afr

Project 74: giving Maasai women access to drinking water and promoting ecology



At an altitude of 2,000 meters, the confreres live with the Maasai population in an arid zone where drought causes a lot of loss of small livestock, and sometimes loss of life too. This year, the lack of water and the difficulty of obtaining food have taken their toll.

There are few trees. Only acacias are more resistant to strong winds. So we tried planting new species of trees. To our delight, this has helped attract a greater variety of birds.



Sebastien Kalengwe. M.Afr

Project 74

The Maasai people live mainly from raising cows, goats and sheep. Due to recurrent droughts, this pastoral lifestyle is tending to disappearing. Younger generations are turning to more stable, sedentary professions.



The help we are requesting is to enable us to continue our tree-planting efforts using a self-sufficient water supply system.

Not only will this benefit the local population, especially women who have to carry heavy loads of water, but it will also save us the cost of buying water delivered by truck.

We would like to thank you for your generosity.

Stéphane Joulain, M.Afr



***The form for your contribution
to project 74 can be found on page 15.***

Rudy Alexander Ruiz Guadalajara



First day of Rudy's French lessons. On the right: Roland Babin.

A native of Honduras and recently naturalized Mexican, Rudy has just completed his first stage of training to become a member of the Society of Missionaries of Africa.

He graduated with a degree in philosophy in Guadalajara, Mexico. Rudy grew up in a Mormon family (Church of Latter-day Saints). It was this family that took him in after the death of his mother. He was the youngest of three children, only three years old.

At the age of eighteen, his native country was experiencing violent political instability. In spite of himself, he had to flee his country. It was a long, arduous and dangerous journey. Hoping to reach the United States, fatigue, fear and multiple unforeseen

events forced him to stay in Mexico. He found refuge in the city of San Luis Potosi.

It was there that he met a priest by the name of Margarito Sánchez Grimaldo, in charge of a shelter for immigrants. Rudy joined him in this pastoral work. He was both sacristan and driver, and looked after the upkeep of the premises.

Father Grimaldo's family adopted Rudy, where he experienced family love. This helped him integrate into Mexican society. It was there that he learned to value life and the Catholic faith.

His membership of the Catholic Church grew out of this experience of charity work. He was baptized on April 23, 2011 at the age of 21. It was one of the happiest days of his life.

Mission

His missionary call emerged during a series of vocational retreats organized by the Missionary Fathers of Guadalupe. However, it wasn't until 2018 that he really felt God's call. It was through a meeting with a Missionaries of Africa candidate that Rudy came to know the Missionaries of Africa. Their charisma, oriented towards an intercultural and multinational community lifestyle, immediately attracted him.

Since January 22, Rudy has been perfecting his French with the help of Roland Babin, a long-standing volunteer with the Missionaries of Africa who himself spent several years in Mexico with them. Learning French will enable Rudy to make the most of his year of spiritual deepening at the Samagan novitiate in Burkina Faso, starting in September 2024.

Our prayers are with him.



*Rudy's first experience
in the snow*

Mission accomplished

Brother **James Calder** died on January 18, 2024 at Notre-Dame Hospital in Montreal at the age of 71, including 21 years of missionary life in Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Canada.

Brother **Marcel Mercier** died on January 6, 2024 in Sherbrooke, aged 100, with 78 years of missionary life in Uganda and Canada.

Father **Raymond Tremblay** died on January 15, 2024 in Sherbrooke, aged 90, with 65 years of missionary life in Burundi and Canada.

Father **Guy Vezeau** died on January 26, 2024 at Jean-Talon Hospital in Montreal at the age of 90, including 62 years of missionary life in Tunisia, Ghana, Tanzania, and Canada.





Aboubacar Mazawadjé

First anniversary since the reopening of the Afrika Centre

The Afrika Centre celebrated the first anniversary of its reopening on January 6, 2024, after three years of inactivity due to Covid-19.

Friends and partners of the Afrika Centre enjoyed a moment of happiness enhanced by talented African artists including Aboubacar Mazawadjé from Niger, Moulaye Dicko from Burkina Faso and the Tafsut group from Montreal, who performed Kabyles dances.



*Tafsut group of Montreal
Kabyle dance*

An extract from the speech of Freddy Kyombo, Director

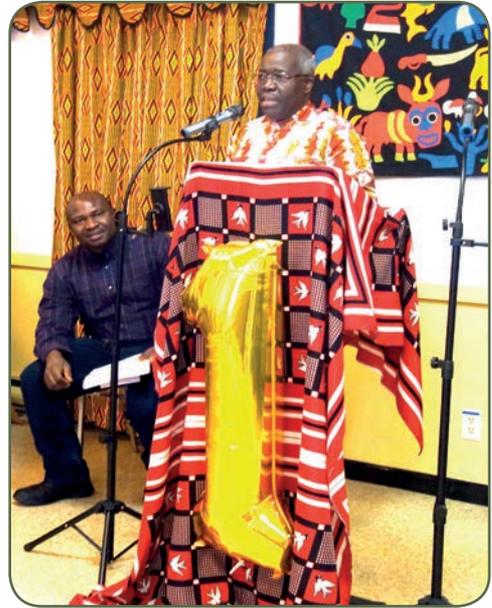
It's with great pleasure that we welcome you to our premises to celebrate together the first anniversary of the reopening of the Afrika Centre.

Indeed, the Afrika Centre reopened its doors on January 7, 2023 after observing health regulations during the Covid-19 period.

It was a wonderful reunion. That's how we came up with the idea of celebrating being together once again, celebrating our friendship and partnerships in an intercultural context.

We would like to express our gratitude to all the people who have given us gifts of high-quality works of art to embellish our various rooms. We'd also like to thank everyone who supports us in any way, with good ideas and various contributions, so that we can carry out our mission with joy and serenity. This is what enables us to be there for you and to give our best. Our volunteers and partners have our gratitude.

Since its reopening, the Afrika Centre has hosted a number of



Freddy Kyombo, M.Afr

activities that have made its walls vibrate and given warmth to our premises. Through various activities organized by our friends, our partners and ourselves, we have lived out our vocation as a place of **supportive hospitality** where we welcome one another from an intercultural perspective. In this way, our diversity becomes a precious asset.

The activities that brought us together this year included Café-Rencontres, meetings of associations and national groups, family celebrations, Eucharistic celebrations, cultural dance groups and choir rehearsals, as well as community gatherings of our hosts, the Missionaries of Africa.



Video : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5WH2c3C0W0>

We want to remain true to our vision of promoting the integration of Africans into their host communities, and to contribute to harmonious living together, through which diversity and differences become a real common wealth.

To make this dream come true, we'll need everyone's help to give us a taste of their diversity and guide us through their cultural heritage, which will enrich us even more.

I hope you all enjoy this time together and welcome one another to this centre, which is home to us all!

***Happy Birthday to all friends
of the Afrika Centre!***



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

- ∞ with a donation for a specific project
- ∞ with a donation for the works of the White Fathers, in general
- ∞ by investing money with an annuity for life
- ∞ with gifts and bequests in your will
- ∞ by contributing to the training of young missionaries
- ∞ with a donation or gift of publicly traded securities

- ✓ You can use page 15 of this magazine, fill it in according to your intentions, cut it out and send it to us with the return envelope to the address on page 16. We also welcome your Mass intentions. Above all, we thank you for your prayers.
- ✓ You can visit our website <https://mafr.net/home> to make a secure online donation.
- ✓ You can also meet a missionary at one of our homes.

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 416 530-1887 mafrtoronto@rogers.com

Missionaries of Africa policy for projects that appear in the Letter to Our Friends:

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

(Cut out and insert in return envelope)



I want to help the Missionaries of Africa

For an ONLINE DONATION > <https://mafr.net/home> > Make a donation

Donation _____ \$ for projet no 74 (See pages 7 and 8)

Gift _____ \$ for the Missionaries of Africa

A donation of \$10 or more entitles you to a tax receipt.

Other ways to help the Mission:

• Investments with an annuity for life

- If you are 60 or over, you can invest your money in the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) «Investments with an annuity for life». This annuity is guaranteed for life and offers a rate that varies according to life expectancy.
- You will receive a tax receipt for at least 20% of the amount paid. Only a small portion of the payments you receive may be taxable.

• Gifts and bequests

«For a brother and a friend, sanctify your money, rather than let it rust in your chest.» (Book of Ecclesiasticus 29:10)

• Scholarships for our 500 Missionaries of Africa candidates

- Bursary for one year of training: \$1,700
- Bursary for three years of training: \$5,000

I enclose a cheque payable to Missionaries of Africa.



I prefer to pay by credit card (check card).



Name and surname: _____

Card No: _____ your CVV _ _ _

Expiry: _____ Signature: _____

P.S. : *If you don't receive this Letter to Friends brochure, just ask for it and we'll send it to you free of charge, four times a year, in addition to the calendar.*

Name and surname: _____

Your postal address: _____

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: _____

Sincere thanks!

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www.mafr.net



Maasai artwork.

The Maasai are a population of semi-nomadic herders and warriors from East Africa, living mainly in central and south-western Kenya and northern Tanzania.



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