

Missionaries of Africa

White Fathers





The mission of the Missionaries of Africa is closely linked to issues of peace and social justice, intercultural and interfaith dialogue. Our involvement in all these areas is evident in our pastoral commitments in parishes and in our specialised 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 that reflect an increasingly universal world. The Missionaries of Africa have around 1,200 members, priests, brothers and lay associates, from 36 different nationalities. Our houses of formation welcome around 550 young people from various African countries, India, the Philippines and Mexico.

**For more information, contact the Missionaries of Africa in your region.
See the list on page 14.**

You can also reach us by e-mail at this address: ams.voc@mafr.org

Les Missionnaires d’Afrique sur Internet

Canadian site: <https://mafr.net/home/>



Website of the Afrika Centre in Montreal:
www.centreafrika.com



American site in Washington:
www.missionariesofafrica.org



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



Site in Guadalajara, Mexico:
www.misionerosdeafrica.org.mx



Missionary Sisters of Notre-Dame
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Celebrating 125 years of friendship: a legacy that inspires the future

It is rare for a friendship to endure over the years with such consistency. And yet, this is precisely what has happened between the White Fathers and the Archdiocese of Quebec since 1901. As we celebrate 125 years of friendship, we honor much more than a simple relationship: we celebrate a history of trust, active solidarity, shared hope, and missionary dynamism in the service of God's people in Africa.

One hundred and twenty-five years of friendship for the Gospel are not an end in themselves, but a call to continue the mission entrusted to us by the Lord, to proclaim the Good News with boldness, to serve the most vulnerable with compassion, and to build bridges of peace and fraternity. It is a period that spans generations, crises, and rebirths. It is proof that a bond, when sincere and carefully nurtured, can become a true pillar of support for those who carry it.

The year 2026 will see the renewal, even the realization, of this friendship that has profoundly marked families and communities, weaving memories and traditions across generations, illustrating our fidelity to Jesus' invitation to share the Gospel around us. United by their faith in Christ, our three confreres are committed to Saint-Roch to write the next chapter with the same generosity, openness, and trust in the service of their brothers and sisters.

Happy ministry to the messengers of the Good News.



**Father
Bartholomew
Bazemo,
Provincial of the
Americas**



The 'White Fathers' are breathing new life into a historic church in Quebec City.

The Missionaries of Africa will resume management of the church located in the St-Roch neighborhood as the Catholic community in Quebec City experiences a resurgence of religious fervor.



Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, left, presides over an annual diocesan intercultural celebration at Saint-Roch Catholic Church on January 12, 2025, in Quebec City. This annual event aims to promote the integration of newcomers. (Photo by Daniel Abel)

By Victor Gaetan¹, Decembre 17, 2025²

Victor Gaetan, senior correspondent for the National Catholic Register, is the author of "God's Diplomats: Pope Francis, Vatican Diplomacy, and America's Armageddon" and a contributor to Foreign Affairs magazine. The views expressed in this commentary do not necessarily reflect those of RNS.

2 Article translated and published with permission from Religious News Services - RNS. Titre original : Repaying Canadian Catholics' support, Africa's 'White Fathers' revive historic Quebec church.

Saint-Roch Church, the largest in Quebec City, lends its name to a trendy neighborhood located on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. In the past, shipyards attracted a Catholic working-class population to this area. The fourth church to occupy this site was built in 1811 in a medieval architectural style. This vast stone structure is still as imposing as ever, even though it now houses a homeless shelter in its basement. Several community organizations also find refuge there. The last resident priest of Saint-Roch left 30 years ago.

In recent years, Saint-Roch Church has only been open on Sundays for Mass, prompting complaints from visitors on tourist websites. "I came on a Wednesday and was disappointed to see that it was only open for a few hours on Sundays," wrote one of them, "so I missed the opportunity to see the inside of the church where my ancestors prayed."

But recently, hope arrived in the form of a group of priests and brothers from a distant mission field that has little to do with the gentrified cafés and bars of the Saint-Roch neighborhood.



On Wednesday, December 17, the Archbishop of Quebec, Cardinal Gérald Cyprien Lacroix, announced that the Missionaries of Africa will commit to providing full-time pastoral care in the St-Roch neighborhood. This Catholic organization, which has been active for 157 years, is dedicated to social justice and the creation of Christian communities in underdeveloped regions. Its first members came from Europe, but starting in 1901, it was largely Quebecers who swelled its ranks. “Hundreds of vocations came from Quebec City to serve in Africa. Some are still alive, although they are now elderly and mostly retired,” Archbishop Lacroix told *Religion News Service* (RNS).

In recognition of the constant support of the Diocese of Quebec, the cardinal revealed that the Missionaries of Africa, whose headquarters are in Rome, have proposed to reestablish themselves in the Quebec city. The prelate shared their message: «You have helped us so much. You have helped us to train priests, to work with the poor, to establish parishes in many countries in Africa. Now we know that you need help, and we want to come and work with you. Whatever your requests, wherever you need us, we are at your disposal.»

In 1868, French Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, then bishop of Algiers, established the Society of Missionaries of Africa, which was one of the first to spread the Christian faith in East and West Africa. The cardinal was an important figure in his day. He advised French Emperor Napoleon III as well as Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII. Lavigerie

burned with a desire to evangelize Africa and end the slave trade there. He paid for the liberation of thousands of people, while pressuring the Vatican to become more involved in the fight against slavery.

Lavigerie dressed his priests in white tunics, reminiscent of those worn by Muslims in North Africa. A rosary with large black and white beads hung around their necks, signifying their affiliation with the Catholic Church. The missionaries were therefore nicknamed “White Fathers,” in reference to their white tunics.



*Saint-Roch Catholic Church in Quebec City.
(Image provided by Google Maps)*

Today, the majority of White Fathers are sub-Saharan Africans. They carry out their ministry mainly in Africa, but also in Mexico and Asia. While many seminaries in France and Canada have closed their doors, countries such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Kenya are experiencing a remarkable influx of students into their training schools. In Uganda, in 1911, missionaries established the first modern Catholic seminary south of the Sahara, which remains active to this day.



Father Barthélémy Bazemo, provincial superior of the Missionaries of Africa for the Americas, based in Washington, D.C., said that members of his congregation are also involved in two other parishes. One is located in Brooklyn, New York, in the United States, and the other in Querétaro, Mexico.

Recruiting staff in Saint-Roch is particularly important, as Quebec City's Catholic community is experiencing a resurgence of faith. Between 2023 and 2025, the number of baptisms in the archdiocese increased by more than 500% (mainly among adults under 30). Most of those who have been baptized are from Africa or Latin America.

"We have many migrants, many people from different countries, and among them, many Africans from different countries," says Bishop Lacroix, who served as a missionary in Colombia for eight years when he was a young priest. For him, these new waves of baptisms represent a "sign of hope" for the city, because "many newcomers are fervent, give good witness, and help us."

Immigration is a crucial demographic factor. Permanent immigration increased in 2024 compared to 2023, and more than 15% of new permanent residents came from Cameroon, a country in Central Africa, according to the *Institut de la statistique du Québec*.

"What gives me great hope is seeing what

the Lord is accomplishing, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in different parts of our diocese," said Bishop Lacroix. «Some of our parishes are growing rapidly. Young people are discovering the faith. We are seeing more youth groups springing up. This year, during Easter, we saw the number of catechumens more than double.» Currently, 17 seminarians are studying in Quebec City to become priests.

"We have been through some very difficult years. There are still many challenges ahead, but I see hope. We also have more seminarians than we have had in the last decade," said the prelate.

Following Lavigerie's example of sending missionaries in groups of three, a team of three French-speaking missionaries "will provide pastoral and compassionate care



Father Serge St-Arneault in the media office at the Missionaries of Africa in Montreal. (Photo by Victor Gaetan)



in Saint-Roch for the residents of Quebec City's lower town, a historic neighborhood with many needs. We are therefore very happy. We have wanted to do this for a long time, but we simply did not have the necessary personnel."

Two of them were born in Canada and currently live in Montreal: Father Serge St-Arneault and Brother Denis Walsh. The third, Father Jean-Paul Guibila, was a missionary in the Congo and worked until recently in Rome. Having recently obtained his visa, he is expected to arrive in Canada in January.

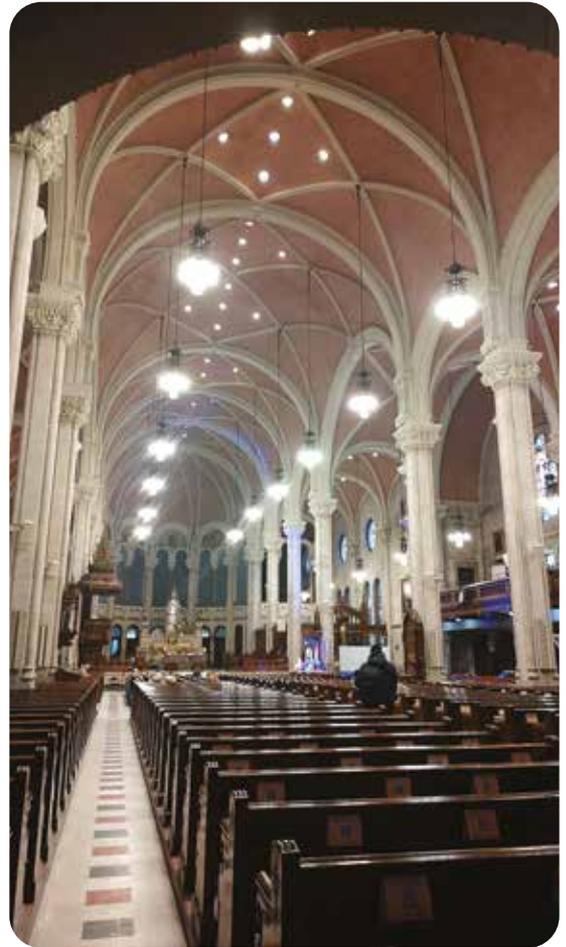
Serge St-Arneault has been a member of the facilitation team at the Centre Afrika in Montreal since 2017. This center provides counseling services tailored to the needs of new immigrants who come there seeking help. The center also makes rooms available to groups such as choirs and other African associations.

In accordance with the statutes of the Missionaries of Africa, Father Serge stated that he and his colleagues lived simply. Therefore, with regard to housing in Quebec City, he said, «Whatever the diocese provides us will be fine.» (The Saint-Roch rectory was sold years ago.) "We will feel at home as long as we can serve the Church and meet the pastoral needs of the community.»

Bathélémy Bazemo, from Burkina Faso, told RNS: "We are convinced that we must

open ourselves up to ministry in northern countries. In the past, we focused on Africa, but today, the African world has changed. Our charism is needed throughout the world."

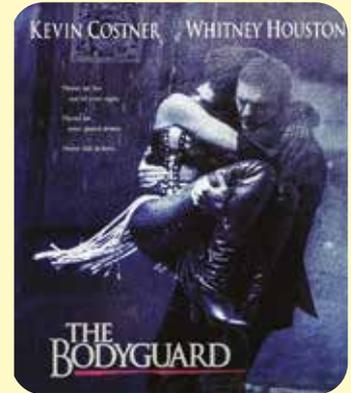
Serge St-Arneault, who worked for 25 years in Congo, Malawi, and Zambia, said that the newly formed pastoral team "will integrate in exactly the same way as all Missionaries of Africa do in Africa."





Following Jesus beyond the cross

In the feature film *The Bodyguard*, a famous singer (Whitney Houston) hires a man (Kevin Costner) to protect her. He intervenes several times to protect the singer, who **constantly gets angry with him**. Finally, she realizes that he has saved her life many times when he suffers a serious injury. The singer finally understands that she owes her life to this man and falls in love with him. She then sings the sublime **I Will Always Love You**.



Getting angry with God

The prophet **Jeremiah** is angry with God after having enjoyed His presence. For 23 years, he preached, but no one listened to him. He wants to die. He then rebukes God: “You have become to me like a deceitful spring, like a well whose waters fail!”

Job’s wife is also angry with God: “Curse God and die!” (2:9).

The same is true of **Teresa of Ávila**, who is exasperated: “I understand that you don’t have many friends, considering the way you treat them.”

John of the Cross evokes a dark night and a gloomy light.

It is the same for **you** and **me** when misfortunes pile up on us, even though we have enjoyed his comforting presence: “Lord, don’t you care that we are perishing?” (Mark 4:38).

After getting to know God, you are deeply amazed by His greatness. Why then so many trials? You then realize that His purpose is to purify you, to free you, and to save you. One day, you will suddenly have an epiphany and declare, “God was there, and I didn’t know it” (Genesis 28:16). Then you will marvel and your gratitude will overflow as you sing passionately, “**I will always love you.**”

Père Denis Bergeron, M.Afr



I would like to thank you very sincerely for the magnificent 2026 calendar I just received. I am particularly touched by the batik illustrations, which take me back some 20 years. Batik reminds me of the four years I spent in Burkina Faso, where I worked as a lay missionary with the White Sisters. I worked with young people, mainly boys, who were living on the streets. The Taab Yinga association, supported by the White Fathers, whose main leader was Father Pierre Béné, took these young people in during the day. They had the opportunity to learn a trade in various workshops, receive a meal, and get clean clothes. I did a thousand and one things, one of which was to be in charge of the batik workshop. The young people enrolled there made Christmas cards to fulfill orders that came mostly from France, which Father Béné faithfully and proudly handled.

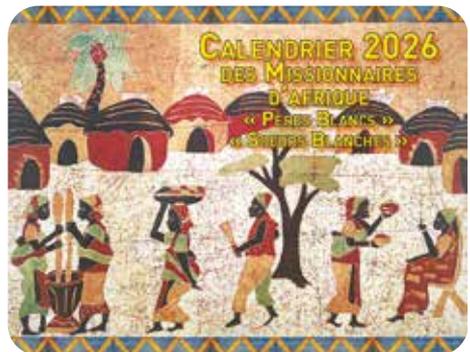


All these young people were very committed to this meticulous work, and they were proud of it. They enjoyed working together.

Those years were the most intense for me on every level. They enriched me spiritually because it was there, among those brave and courageous people, that I felt closest to God, in my true mission in life. I could have devoted my life to it. I loved those young people so much; I considered them my children.

So imagine my surprise and deep joy when I discovered your new calendar. I see it as a sign that God is still with me despite my doubts.

I have just turned 76 and I am still wondering what my new mission in life is, what God wants me to devote myself to in order to grow closer to him as I reach the end of my journey.



A thousand THANKS!

Cécile Garnache

North Battleford, Saskatchewan



Mexican seminarian in Burundi

**BORN IN 1990 IN FRANCISCO MOZARAN, HONDURAS,
HE IS IN HIS FIRST YEAR OF INTERNSHIP IN AFRICA.**

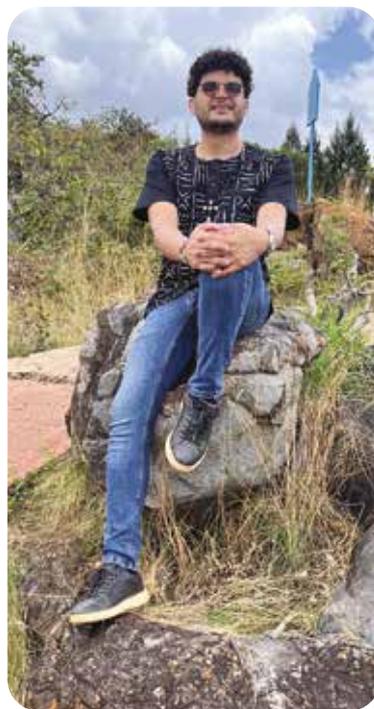
I send you warm greetings from the parish of Mucunguzi, Burundi, where I am learning the local language, Ikirundi. I arrived here on July 15, after completing my spiritual year in Burkina Faso. I spent only a few days in Bujumbura, the capital, before setting off for Gitega. The journey takes about three hours on a winding road. It was there that I took my language course for two months, followed by a month of immersion in a nearby village.

Every morning, I made a point of meeting families, greeting students, and going to the village market. This routine allowed me to learn the language effectively while discovering local customs and traditions. I really enjoyed this experience. Children are excellent teachers.

At the parish of Mucunguzi, I divide my time between young people, the sick, and a group of albinos who live near us, in accordance with our spirit of “all to all” spirituality, inherited from Charles Lavigerie, our founder. Learning Ikirundi is a challenge for me, but I nevertheless strive to be a source of encouragement for all those whom God places in my path each day. All of this nourishes the calling that God has placed in my heart.

I warmly greet the Missionaries of Africa of the AMS. May the Lord bless you abundantly. We are all “Turi kumwe,” which means “All together”!

Rudy Alexander



A naturalized Mexican citizen, Rudy is originally from Honduras. Baptized as an adult, he has always wanted to live out his faith through concrete commitments. His life has already been enriched by many intercultural experiences. In fact, he learned French in Montreal



Photographic report by Rudy in Burundi.



Library of Tizi-Ouzou in Algeria

December 27, 2025 marked the 31st anniversary of the tragic death of our four White Father confreres in Tizi-Ouzou. Since December 8, 2018, they have been canonized as blessed in our Church in Algeria. To commemorate this event, their friends and former students of the fathers are gathering for a day in their honor. They feel great pride and gratitude for the education they received.

We wish to highlight the location where our brothers met their tragic end. It is now home to the parish church, our university library, a large green space to be developed and beautified, and our residence. The goal is to transform this place into a pilgrimage site for our blessed brothers.

The youngest of the four, Father Christian Chessel, dreamed, along with his colleagues, of providing a library and reading room for the city's young students. That dream became a reality twenty years ago. Of course, the context has changed

significantly, but the reading room is still very popular, thanks to its calm, studious atmosphere and high-performance Internet network. In addition to students, there is an opportunity to reach out to new retirees, who are former students of the fathers and have a great desire to learn and read good books.

The Kabyle region is home to many talented historians and novelists. Algeria has a number of high-quality publishing houses. Literary production is abundant. We therefore wish to expand our collection to include recently



The form for your contribution to Project 82 can be found on page 15.

published works from Algeria and the French- and English-speaking world that will captivate our readership, while ensuring a comfortable environment and reliable internet connection.

As the community of Missionaries of Africa in Tizi-Ouzou, we turn to you to ask for your spiritual and financial support.

United in prayer! Many thanks!

Père Claude Venne, M.Afr,
Père Lucien Somé, M.Afr
et Père Alain Mugisho, M.Afr



Commemoration on December 27, 2025, at the Tizi-Ouzou cemetery





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 www.mafr.net to make a secure online donation.
- ✓ You can also meet a missionary at one of our homes.

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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- Each project is supervised by a Missionary of Africa.



(Cut out and insert in return envelope)

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For an **ONLINE DONATION** > www.mafr.net > Make a donation

Donation _____ \$ for projet no 82 (See page 12)

Gift _____ \$ for the Missionaries of Africa

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

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• 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.

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Name and surname: _____

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Sincere thanks!

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« Don't forget Africa! »
<https://mafr.net/home/>



*Visit of Archbishop Lacroix of Quebec City
to our confreres in Washington.
Brother Luciano Fuchs, Father Antonio Koffi,
Father Barthélemy Bazemo, Archbishop Cyprien Lacroix,
and Father Cyriaque Mounkono.*



THIS LOGO REPRESENTS NORTH AMERICA WITHOUT BORDERS, AS DESIRED BY THE PROVINCE OF THE AMERICAS. INDEED, IT IS MADE UP OF THREE COUNTRIES, NAMELY CANADA, THE UNITED STATES, AND MEXICO. HOWEVER, ITS MEMBERS FORM A SINGLE MISSIONARY FAMILY, ITSELF COMPOSED OF ALL EXISTING CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIVERSITIES. WE AFFIRM THE UNITY OF GOD'S CHILDREN IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.



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