



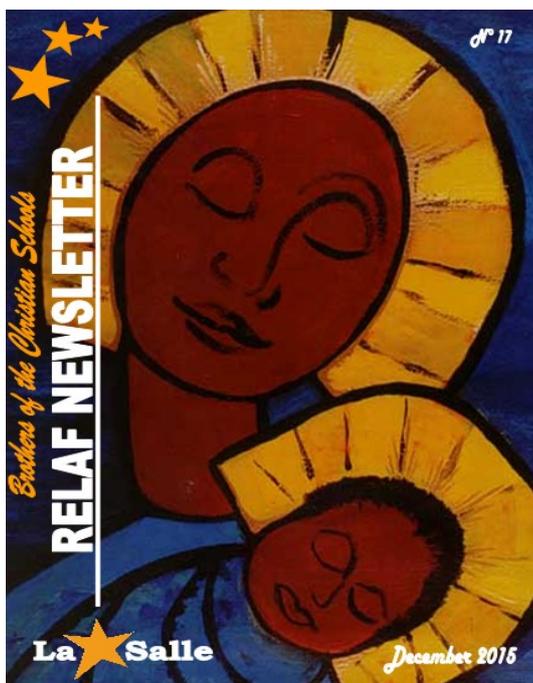
Brothers of the Christian Schools

RELAF NEWSLETTER

La  Salle

December 2015





SUMMARY

Editorial	2
Regional CIL : Summary (continued...)	3
Novitiate Bobo-Dioulasso: Rite of Entry	5
District of Antananarivo: 150 years of Lasallian Presence	6
ISSIG: Graduation ceremony	7
District of Central Africa: Education of Pygmy Children	8
Rwanda: Ninth Chapter	10
Passing through the Holy Door...	11
RELAF: Regional Assembly 2016	12
Brief Info	13
Some dates to remember	14
Calendar of Br. General Councilor	14
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2016	16

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Br. Pierre OUATTARA

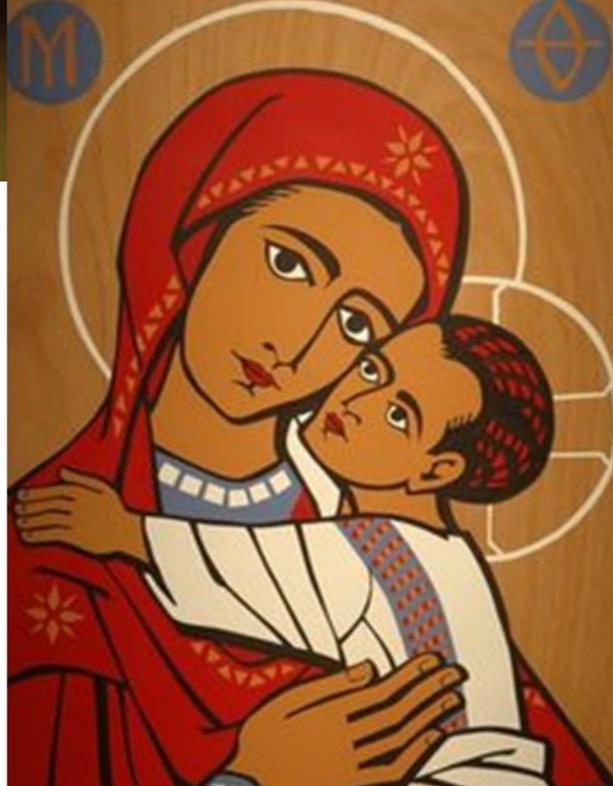
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Christmas is coming soon! Caught in the whirl of material preparations for the feast, don't we risk remaining in the superficial aspects? Instead of a religion of God's mercy towards human beings, here apparently is coming with Christmas, the time of a religion of human beings mercy towards God ... In what way Christian faith is still a message of hope that can transform our human life? Let's see how this faith leads us into a new form of life.

Can we hear the silent question that the newly-born Christmas Child addresses to his environment: "Am I loved?" That is to say: "Am I welcome?". The answer, for those who can hear such questions, falls within one's personal responsibility. This means that **with** the newborn of Christmas is given the grace to learn to be responsible otherwise. Thinking of the child to be born, to protect, to care for and educate, every human life should take another turn, another dimension: it should rise to its responsibility as a **responsibility for another**. And that is the way every human life is saved, becoming hopeful and responsible for a life beyond its own life. The child to be born requires us to think **beyond** our present lives...

Moreover, he offers the image of a moral perfection higher than that of an adult. His innocence, his spontaneity, his simplicity in his goals, his readiness to say or accept the truth, humility, purity, generosity, invites the adult to rise to his level. The child represents our moral future, our ideal. If so, when we pretend to educate him, don't we lower him instead of raising, corrupting him instead of making him better? In reality, he needs education to develop a sense of responsibility.

In a calculator world where the strongest tends to oppress the weaker, amid adults far from angels, child's innocence only makes him more fragile. He especially needs secured space, an educational environment generator of responsibility where, with him and in him, could be created a new being who would have kept the **best of the spirit of childhood**. If the society wants to go in its own improvement's direction, it has to ensure that the children rights are respected. According to Littré, mercy is that "*feeling by which the misery of others touches our heart*" ... Came forth naked from his mother's womb, the child is only **able to beg**, or at most how **to promise**. He has nothing else to offer us but his presence ... By his poverty, when we allow ourselves to meet him; he questions the very root of our humanity. In his eyes, easily can be imagined a silent question: "*Who art thou?*" This question immediately brings a practical side: "*For you, who am I? What do I represent for you?*" Our humanity will be judged by the way we treat him. He calls for a responsibility that we cannot avoid without at the same time denying ourselves as human beings. Children cornered each one of us with the implicit question: who are you, personally **for yourself?**

The child, by his naive questions, disturbs us because he compels us to rethink our so-called evidences. As long as we spend time to listen, he leads us to reconsider our certainties, to think of what is unthought-of in us, to become **more responsible** for what we think and do. With his vulnerability, the child puts in question the entire society. What the society is doing **to** and **for** its most vulnerable members? Caring for a child is something demanding. We prefer to protect ourselves from him because he threatens our peace, our comfort and upsets our desires for selfish happiness.

Being an educator needs to be learnt and can save from oneself. From whom can we learn it if not from the child? Embodying our origin in his immeasurable fragility, putting before our eyes the poverty and precariousness of our first condition, he offers us the opportunity to learn in a practical way responsibility with simplicity and humility. The child's vulnerability puts before our eyes the concreteness of our relation to the world. It is revealing that, from birth, we are "beings at the mercy" of hazards of the world and as such, "*beings submitted/handed to others*" in whom we trust...

Christmas, God trusting in a woman, confiding himself in a man, in a people! Life in every newborn is promising... A promise of which nobody has an idea and will only be fulfilled if the child finds someone on his way able to prepare him to take a responsibility that he is the only one capable to take. May the Christmas spirit fill more and more our lives such that we experience the joy of the Gospel.

Br. Pierre OUATTARA

The goal of the association is the educational service of the poor according to the charism which La Salle was inspired. But this association for the mission can be only effective in a shared fraternity.

It is only in this context that we can understand the changes brought into the Revised Rule. By the way, how is it that in the Revised Rule the Chapter on "fraternal community" comes before that of "apostolic community"? Simply because it is clear that this is fraternity lived in the community that becomes the cement of the mission. And this mission is unique. It is primarily the Father's mission in which each Brother participates firstly as a community and then individually. It is true that we have one common mission, but each brother is ministering for the sake of the mission. The ministry of each Brother participates in the accomplishment of the common mission. It can be noticed that some older Brothers have the feeling of being left out in the mission because they no longer exercise any apostolic ministry. The new Rule relieves them by showing that there are several ways of participating in the mission, even when one is struck by age or infirmity. Through his prayer, fraternal communion, advice, ideas, we continue to participate in the common mission which is the Father's work. But such a feeling and degree of participation is assumed and lived happily when the community is truly the living home of the Brothers.

Community understood as living home means that, through comparison with ecology, it is the result of a construction in which each member brings his stone that is as indispensable as that of others. The warmth and the fraternal communion are the result of the effort of each member of the community. But this community also should be a community of faith where experience of God is shared, a community that imitates the Trinitarian unity and communion, a community of prayer, of listening and of the meditation of the Word of God, a community where each Brother is important and benefit from the attention of others, a community where each Brother is fully committed and aware of the role of his testimony in life and the community commitment.



Participants from Lwanga District

From there emerges the intimate bond between community of Brothers, consecration and mission.

Our ministerial identity built around the Lasallian charism implies spirituality, attitudes and behaviours, missionary reflexes, and supported by the community. We are indeed a community of consecrated men, a community of God's ministers, consecrated together to bring the Gospel wherever we are sent. As a ministerial community, we live our consecration in solidarity with the poor and first of all in communion among ourselves (together and by association), then in communion with those who are committed to the mission with us (the lay people).

Our vow of association serves as a model to them, just as this vow itself has the Trinitarian communion as model. This is the anchor point of the revised rule in its parts 2 and 3, on Consecration and Mission which Brother Alain Houry tackled.

A reminder of the history of the Institute teaches us that there was a strong split which occurred when the Brothers had to make a choice between consecration and mission with regard to the law of 07.07.1904 which prohibited members of congregations in France any form of education, consequently eliminating all teaching congregations. For some, that is, those who have chosen exile, it is consecration that comes first. For others, that is, those who remained to continue providing the educational service of the poor, without

being publicly Brothers, it is the mission that is more important. This split is still going on today in the definition of the vocation of the Brother. Now, for decades, with Michel Sauvage, we know that when the Founder speaks of the Brothers, he always uses the verb "to consecrate" followed by "for".

"We are entirely consecrated to you to procure with all our power and all our cares the establishment of the Society of the Christian Schools" (Heroic Vow); "I consecrate myself entirely to you to procure your glory as much as I will be able and as you will require of me. "(1694). Clearly stated, far from separating, classifying or hierarchizing, we must consider the constitutive dimensions of the identity of the Brother in an integrative approach. The Rule of 1987 clearly expressed it in article 10: "Each Brother strives to integrate in his person the constitutive dimensions of his vocation: consecration to God as lay religious, apostolic ministry of education, especially among the poor, and community life "and article 81a," "The integration effort of the elements that constitute the life of Brother must be engaged during the initial formation and continued throughout the permanent formation."

There is no doubt that the demand of integration of these constitutive dimensions of the vocation of the Brother is of utmost necessity for the readability and the understanding of it. But then, from what pattern do we do this integration?



Participants from West Africa District

Which element can help put together all these dimensions? Which way to follow to achieve this integration? These are the questions that will make up the second presentation of Brother Alain Houry, "The centrality of the vow of association" for the understanding of our identity. Following the example of John-Baptist de La Salle and the first Brothers, the Brothers today make the vow of association for the educational service of the poor. This vow, together with the stability in the Institute, expresses the specificity of religious consecration of the Brothers for the glory of God: it strongly unites every Brother to the Brothers, while it broadens and strengthens the solidarity spirit of belonging to the whole Institute. *(To be continued...)*



Photo taken at the Closing ceremony of the Regional CIL

According to the Novitiate tradition, future novices perform the rite of entry. This was again the case this year with 13 postulants from four Districts: Antananarivo (6), Central Africa (1), Congo - Kinshasa (1), Gulf of Benin (3) and the Delegation of Rwanda (1). Prior to the ceremony, a retreat was held from 3 to 9 October 2015 at the monastery of Christ the Redeemer-Kiri. It was animated by Brother Director Sylvain CONSIMBO. During the retreat, he made known the theme of the year: "*he novitiate, an evangelical adventure.*"

The ceremony took place in front of the novitiate chapel on 1st November, All Saints Day, at 18:15. The celebration began with the song "*Marcher à ta suite ô Seigneur*". The Word of God was taken from the Gospel of Saint Luke 9.57 to 62. In his exhortation, the Brother Visitor of West Africa, Julien DIARRA, said: "*The rite is sacred; it is an initiation; so one must be natural. Wear the habit! It is an outward sign of our identity but also our call to holiness.*"

You are the hope and the hope of the Institute", he finally said. After dialogue with the Brother Visitor, we received the habit, the cross and the Rule.

After the ceremony, the novitiate community and guests shared a fraternal meal. Note that the parish priest Father Jean-Pierre Doumbaye, the parish of Our Lady of the Cenacle, the Sisters of Sisters of the Annunciation of Bobo (SAB), the Little Sisters of the Holy Child, The Servant Sisters of Virgin Mother Mary, Brothers of the Provincial and Tounouma community, have honored us with their presence. It was a moment of joy for me, and at the same time an invitation to let myself be formed, to persevere in my novitiate and overcome the challenges in my commitment. May Saint Francis of Assisi, the Patron Saint of our group intercede for us in this evangelical adventure.

Louis ATIKPO
Novice 1st Year, Bobo Dioulasso



On November 24, 2015, the Lasallian Family gathered in Soavimbahoaka - Antananarivo, to mark the anniversary of the arrival of the first De La Salle Brothers in Madagascar. A solemn Mass was celebrated on this occasion by the Episcopal Vicar of the Archdiocese of Antananarivo. Students, teachers, educators, former students of Lasallian schools and various Lasallian groups honored the event. During Mass, a special prayer was said for all the deceased Brothers of the District. Let us recall that the 3 Brothers Yon, Ladolien and Gonzalvien were the first De La Salle Brothers that arrived in the Island on November 24, 1866.

Saint Joseph Andohalo School was the first school entrusted to their care. Blessed Raphael Louis was one of the first fruits of their dedication to the education of many children and the youth in Madagascar. Today the Brothers and their Lasallian collaborators continue the evangelical adventure through the education of thousands of children and young people in



14 schools and educational centers in the country. The celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Lasallian presence in the Island was opened last year on the same historical date of November 24. Thus, throughout the pastoral year 2015-2016, the District of Antananarivo will celebrate this anniversary with various activities whose theme is: "*De La Salle mampiombona antsika*" or "*De La Salle unites us.*"

Br. Michel Tolojanahary



The beginning of a new academic year for ISSIG (*Institut Supérieur Spécialité en Informatique et Gestion*) took place on Saturday, December 5, 2015. Like every year, it was also an opportunity for the Institute to celebrate the graduation of students who completed their training attested by Diploma Degree.

Indeed, this year, 85 students have been enrolled while 87 students received their Diplomas in a festive atmosphere. This is the 22nd graduation ceremony since the creation of this Institute. According to its tradition, the ceremony began with the Eucharist followed by speeches and presentation of the Diploma certificate to those who graduated. The celebration continued with the reception at the hotel "Pic-Vert Ambatobe".

Note that ISSIG is a Catholic institute and belongs to the De La Salle Brothers of Antananarivo District. Since 22 years, it has formed many young people in Computer Management, Management in Accounting. For the academic year 2015-2016, ISSIG has a total of 256 students. *"By the end of their training at ISSIG, these young people are prepared to integrate themselves into the world of work while those still in formation are also trained in the creation and management of projects,"* said Mr. Emmanuel ANDRIAMAHALEOLAZA Rosa, Director of ISSIG.

Sr. Gorette RAOLIARISOA, sgs
3rd Year Student, ISSIG



Central Africa: Education of Pygmy Children 8

For over forty years, the Brothers of the District of Central Africa, worked individually and in community, to initiate the education of the most marginalized ethnic group amongst the Pygmy people, especially the Baka people in the South and East Cameroon. We invite readers of RELAF Newsletter to take a quick retrospective look at the three articles on the mission of the Brothers of the District of Central Africa with Baka pygmy children.

A brief history

In the 1970s, Brother Frederic HUYSMAN from the Netherlands came to the De La Salle College in Doumé, and was in contact with the Baka people. He was taken by a passion to work with this very particular ethnic group. Soon after, he was forced to hastily return to Netherlands.

His nephew, Brother Antoine HUYSMAN was attentive to what his uncle brought to the Baka pygmies. He is inspired by the same sentiments to serve this minority in eastern Cameroon. He had to come and settle at the heart Equatorial rainforest, in Baka camp, called MENZOH. There he lived for almost twenty years (1982-2000). He observed the lifestyle of the Baka people in the forest. He would implement in classroom the traditional education model to initiate the Baka children into modern education system. Thus was born the ORA method (Observe-Reflect-Act). Brother Anthony had spent two decades to spread this specific method of education throughout the sub-region of Central Africa: Cameroon,



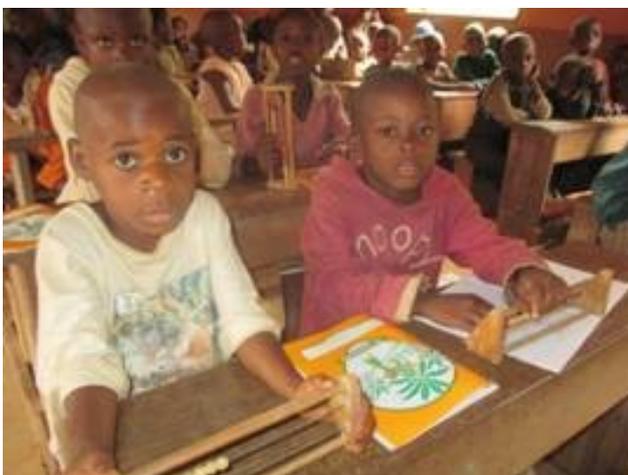
Central African Republic, Congo and Zaire (now DRC). But since 2001, a very bad accident forced him to return to Netherlands.

From 2002 to 2007, the District successively appointed Brothers Claude Pierre DANMO, Gilbert and Jean-Marie OUILABEGUE FOUQUERAY to ensure the continuity of the mission with the Baka Pygmy children in a local NGO AAPPEC (*Association pour l'Auto Promotion des Populations de l'Est Cameroon*). In January 2007, the latter was dissolved by the Conference of Bishops of the Eastern Region.



District Chapter and Mission to the Baka pygmies

During the same year, 2007, the District Chapter held in Atok (one of the sub regions of the Eastern Region of Cameroon) unanimously decided to initiate the District in the proposed pre-schooling and education of Pygmy children. The Chapter had even described the project "prophetic and significant" work. Thus, since 2008, Brother Alvaro Rodriguez, the then Superior General gave permission to start a community of Brothers in Lomié under the name of Saint John Baptist de La Salle Community.



Since then, the District has assigned Brothers to the Lomié community to continue our mission of educating the Baka pygmy children who are very distant from the school system both in physical and geographical, moral and intellectual sense. Lomié community had been made up of: Brothers Jean-Marie FOUQUERAY (Community Director), Roger COTNOIR, Emmanuel BENOUNGA, Bogdan FITIO, Emile ONANA, Thierry FOKAM, DERING Narcisse and Gilbert OUILABEGUE.



The Lomié community, composed of 3 Brothers (Jean-Marie, Narcisse and Gilbert) is today committed in the mission to the pygmy children with two objectives: to bring schools closer to them and prepare them in the CEB - DLS (*Centres d'Education de Base De La Salle*) to integrate the formal school system. (To be continued...)

*Br. Gilbert OUILABEGUE
District of Central Africa*



The Delegation of Rwanda celebrated from December 10 to 13, 2015 in Kissaro Community, the 9th chapter of her history. Twenty four Brothers of the Delegation, all Chapter members took part in this important event. It all started Thursday, December 10 at 6:30 am with the celebration of the opening Mass during which, Brother DIRETENADJI Anatole, Delegate handed officially the obedience from the Superior General to the new President of the Delegation, Brother Jean Bosco BIGUIRIMANA.



The work of the Chapter started by receiving the message of the Superior General to the Chapter, the message read by his Delegate who, at the same time, declared open the 9th chapter of the Delegation. The key message of the Superior General is an invitation *"to illuminate the capitulants with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit so that their Chapter becomes an experience of God, enrich their spirit of faith and stimulates their apostolic zeal."* And above all, *"to be very attentive to the three topics that are of extreme importance: effective and responsible leadership, respect for authority, accountability and transparency."* [...]

Then followed the reception of reports of communities and works presented by their respective Director. Let us note that, it is the first time that a Lay person, who also presented the report of the structure of which he is responsible.

In the afternoon, the presentation of the reports of the outgoing President and the Bursar of the Delegation ended the first day of the Chapter.

On the second day, in the morning and as expected, work in commissions started. In the afternoon, the presentation of propositions by the Reporters began. Many of the propositions have been discussed. We constantly urged the commissions to refer to the 45th General Chapter Documents of the Institute. [...]

It was on the third and the final day in the morning that, the propositions reviewed and corrected, were voted... In general, the Chapter went well, the atmosphere was very fraternal and courteous. The Capitulants then gathered in the community chapel for Thanksgiving Mass that is meaningful in this year dedicated to the Consecrated Life and to the Jubilee of Mercy. Note finally that the Chapter was preceded by the annual retreat of the Brothers in the Delegation.

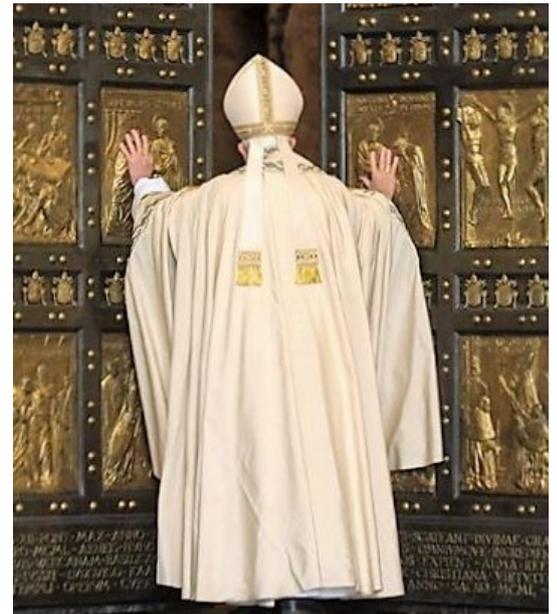
*Br. Anatole DIRETENADJI
Delegate of the Superior General to Rwanda*



“Passing through the Holy Door commits us to making our own the mercy of the Good Samaritan”, declared Pope Francis in his homely last Tuesday 8th December, at Saint Peter’s Square, during the solemn celebration of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. The Holy Father also presided over the celebration and the opening of the Jubilee Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015 – November 2016). He then proceeded to the opening of the Holy Door.



The opening of this Holy Door – walled up the remaining time – reminds us, during the jubilee, an extraordinary journey towards salvation is proposed to the Faithful; the Church offers in fact a generalized pardon, indulgence open to all and the opportunity to renew one’s relationship with God and neighbor. The Pope first passes through, followed by Benedict XVI. It is the first time in the history of the Church two popes launching a jubilee. “Let us set aside all fear and dread, for these do not befit men and women who are loved. Instead, let us experience the joy of encountering that grace which transforms all things” declared the



Holy Father before a crowd estimated over 50,000 people. During this Mass, the prayer intentions were read in various languages, including African (Swahili), a concrete way to show the universality of the Word of God and the Church.

Source: www.zenit.org



RELAF will hold her 6th Regional Meeting from 11 to 15 January 2016 in Nairobi - Kenya. According to the Statutes of our Region, the main goals of the Assembly are to evaluate what we have lived as an experience since our last Regional Assembly in 2010, to appropriate the Acts of the 45th General Chapter, to study particular subjects relating to the Church and to the Institute in Africa, to give orientations for the years to come and to approve the Statutes with its possible modification.



To this end, Brothers, Lasallian Collaborators and Lasallian Groups have been invited to send contributions in form of notes. The Assembly is expected to have 43 participants. These include members by right, elected delegates from various Districts and from the Delegation of Rwanda as well as invited persons from the Center of the Institute and the Superior General.

The Preparatory Commission composed of the Regional Team, in collaboration with Lwanga District, has been at work for weeks in preparation for this Assembly. Let us recall that one of the key issues to be addressed will be the Strategic Plan of our Region for the next 6 years. The commitment of everyone is therefore necessary for the development and effective implementation of this Plan.

Thus, let us join forces to build the future of the Lasallian Educational Mission in our Region, in our continent so much in need of men and women inspired by the charism and spirituality of our Holy Founder. In short, the Regional Assembly is an opportunity for our Region to show our unity in diversity which is made visible by our Delegation and Districts that form one and united Region.

The Preparatory Commission

New appointment



The Superior-General has named Br. Jean Bosco Bigirimana as President of the Delegation of Rwanda. His mandate began on December 11, 2015 and will last for 3 years. We congratulate Br. Jean Bosco on his new mission and offer him our support and our prayers.

Some dates to remember

December 21—23, 2015	Lome	2 nd Gulf of Benin District Chapter
December 26—30, 2015	Toussiana	14 th West African District Chapter
January 2—5, 2016	Nairobi	Charles Lwanga District Chapter
January 3—8, 2016	Kinshasa	17 th Congo Kinshasa District Chapter
January 11—15, 2016	Nairobi	Regional Assembly
January 17—19, 2016	Nairobi	RELAF Brother Visitors' Conference

Calendar of Br. General Councilor

Date	Venue	Events
December 21—23, 2015	Lomé	2 nd Gulf of Benin District Chapter
December 26—28, 2015	Toussiana	14 th West African District Chapter
January 1—7, 2016	Nairobi	Charles Lwanga District Chapter
January 11—15, 2016	Nairobi	Regional Assembly
January 17—19, 2016	Nairobi	RELAF Brother Visitors' Conference
January 22, 2016	Nairobi	Travel: Nairobi—Rome
January 24 —5 March 2016	Rome	5 th Session General Council



The Regional Council of Relaf wishes you

Merry Christmas



*A Child is born,
Emmanuel, God with us,
God who saves us.
May the Child Jesus help us
with humility pass through the Door of
Mercy and May He accompany us in
our Evangelical Adventure!*

BB. Pierre Ouattara, Anatole Diritenadji, Gabriel Onwu, Michel Tolojanahary

**Happy
New
Year**

2016

