

# RELAF NEWSLETTER N°35

Brothers of the Christian Schools



**Lasallian Region of Africa**



June 2020

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# EDITORIAL

**I**s the current pandemic a punishment of humanity by God? Fabrice Hadjadj<sup>1</sup> proposes to see it as an access to the truth of our human existence. With this pandemic, the **Way of the Cross** no longer evokes the practice of a devotion proper to Christians; it becomes, on a planetary level, a common human practice.

Should each one view himself or herself solely as a **victim** when faced with the suffering and all the deaths the pandemic causes? To answer this question requires being able to move away from the pain one feels because they are in a situation of victim who is suffering from some pain external to the self, to **experiencing pain that is** much deeper in itself. The pandemic is an opportunity to ask ourselves about our **personal and collective unconscious complicity** with evil. Indeed, through our unconsciousness, we can contribute to increasing evil and suffering in the world. Confinement offers the opportunity to each one to look within oneself and to ask oneself about one's complicity with the expansion of evil. In general, we unintentionally commit or transmit evil. There are many cases where ignorance, negligence and indifference are not excuses but constitute offences, if not crimes.

Under the threat of contamination, we become aware of our dependencies, of our solidarity with others. The care given to our own interiority allows us to discover another face of ourselves. Suffering, be it violence we suffer or violence we inflict on others, has two sides, one of which is often forgotten, if not rejected. To suffer means **to undergo** but also to **endure**<sup>2</sup>. The person who suffers has the opportunity to learn self-endurance, to take his suffering upon himself. It is good to know how to manage self-endurance, to **know how to carry one's cross**; for without this, we tend to make others carry our own, taking revenge for example. Carrying one's cross leads to the practice of the virtue of patience with oneself. He who endures nothing knows only how to suffer and make others endure evil; he makes others bear the full weight of his suffering. He **lets himself go**, ultimately, like a dead weight on the back of others. He or she does not stand to be frustrated or deprived of anything; he or she is always protesting or revolting, on the verge of collapsing on himself and sometimes to the extent of committing suicide. The characteristic of today's society is that it encourages impatience, the inability to wait. However, impatience develops the inability to self-endurance, makes any limitation unbearable, and creates intolerance with oneself and with others.

When Jesus asks us to carry our cross and follow him, it is something that every human being must do; what changes with him is **the meaning of that cross**<sup>3</sup>. God suffers from our lack of love<sup>4</sup>. Without love we cannot stand each other<sup>5</sup>, we **undergo reciprocal** suffering. The pandemic brings all humankind into a collective and

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vatican TV, Holy Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2020

<sup>2</sup> This is the meaning clearly seen for example in the request "bear with us sir that this lady and her child be attended to before you."

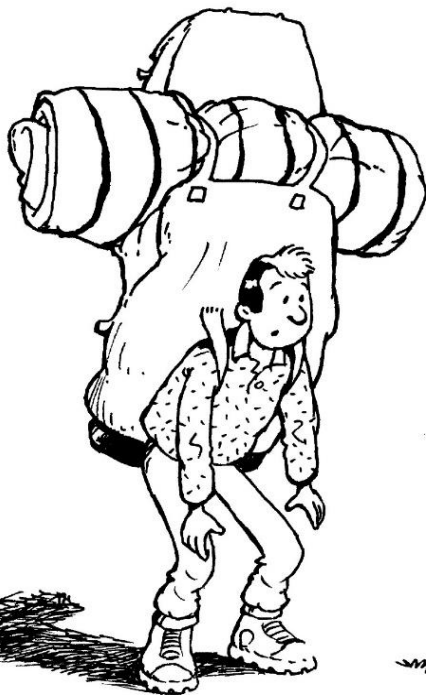
<sup>3</sup> Matthew 16 :24.

<sup>4</sup> Read Matthew 25:31-46. Thought present in Maurice Zundel and also in Gustave Thibon writings.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:7. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

individual way of the cross. Unable to bear our existence, which has become a cross, we tend to **transfer our cross to others**. Dear Brothers, dear Sisters, dear Lasallians, we need courage and patience. Let us pray that this trial from the pandemic may be a source of salvation for the multitude. May Jesus live more than ever in our hearts, in our members, in whole our being.

Brother Pierre OUATTARA  
General Councillor



*“Dear Brothers, dear Sisters, dear Lasallians, we need courage and patience”*

# OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT HAPPENINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The experiences of lockdown in South Africa has been no different from that of other parts of the world. Businesses, restaurants, hairdressers, schools and churches have all been closed. This situation has opened up time and opportunities for self-reflection, family time, prayer, appreciation of nature. So how have our Lasallian

apostolates responded during this time of isolation? Teachers have had to change the way they teach; care workers have been faced with new challenges of how they can continue to feed the poor and minister to the sick; prayer services have taken on a new look; communities have reached out to each other. The word that best describes the past few months at De La Salle Holy Cross College is SUPPORT. The Brothers, the board members, the management and staff, parents, students and the wider community, have joined together to use their own resources and skills to give support wherever it has been needed. Technology has been the pathway to regular communication, innovative teaching and creative liturgy. Easter liturgies, De La Salle Day, the month of May, are some of examples of how the talents and input of so many Lasallians contributed to keeping the focus of our faith central to all that we do during this time of crisis. Many of the online RE lessons

have encouraged the students to find ways to be 21st century disciples. We are called to be people of HOPE. Recent events have opened our eyes and our hearts to a new way – out of fear and desperation, hope emerges and transforms. St John Baptist de la



Salle Day with a difference: Much like Lasallians all over the world, we celebrated our Founders Day on 15

May virtually. We were #TogetherinSpirit. Our pupils were encouraged to dress in bright colours on the day.



Brother Gabriel sent an encouraging video message out to the College community explaining the life and work of St John Baptist de la Salle.

**Mary Hyam,**  
**Sector of South Africa / Lwanga District**

## NYUNDO SCHOOL OF ARTS: WHEN THE RAIN WORSEN WHAT COVID-19 HAS STARTED



**T**he Nyundo School of Arts is one of the 5 educational works of the Delegation of Rwanda. This school, which is the only one of its kind since the history of the Delegation and of the country in general, is located in the West closer to the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. For this school year 2020, it accommodated 345 students in two options: graphic art and ceramic sculpture. Since March 13, with the happening of the covid-19 in Rwanda, the government decided to close the schools to avoid any kind of possible contamination. All schools remain closed until September. At Nyundo School of Arts, which was functioning well thanks to the school fees and the production of the students' artwork, activities have stopped and the heavy rain worsen the situation. In the night of May 6 to 7, 2020, heavy rain fell in the Western Province of Rwanda. This rain caused the

Sebeya River to overflow and invade the school and its entire garden. The Nyundo School of Arts is located in the valley of the Sebeya river. This river which, during the heavy rainy season, fills up with



water from the surrounding hills and mountains, overflows and causes significant damage. The Government of Rwanda, in its fight to protect its population from natural disasters, has initiated some projects to eradicate the problem which, until today, persists. For the protection of the Nyundo School of Arts, a modern bridge has been built. Along the river,

a wall was erected to prevent water from overflowing, but all these efforts were not enough to thwart the flow of water. In contrast to previous years, this year's rainfall significant. The water broke through the fence wall and forced its way into the school, collecting and destroying whatever it could find in its path.



After the destruction of the school gate, the vegetable garden was the second casualty. The school yard, much of the lawn embellished with artwork (statues) and the basketball and volleyball courts were turned



into a lake. Luckily students were not present. The dormitories, classrooms, dining hall and kitchen were filled with water up to window level. Some belongings left by students were washed away or permanently damaged. The sacks of rice, corn flour, sugar, which were waiting for the students to return soon, were flooded. For the first time in history, the water reached the level of the buildings such as the chapel and the administration building, which are

normally at a good height in relation to the rest of the



buildings. How to cope with this unexpected situation with Covid-19 which destabilized the economy of the world and of the country in particular? This is the question that the school staff is tackling as they try to do what they can, so as to prepare to welcome students in September this year.

**Bro. Ferdinand BIZIYAREMYE**  
**RELAF Regional Community**

# SHARING OF A YOUNG FSC MISSIONARY IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA

**H**ere is my sharing about Equatorial Guinea, a country in the Central part of Africa...

Living in Equatorial Guinea is not easy. "Travel and you will see many things" (Yaka proverb from Zaire). Also, know that "who comes to a foreign country,

Secondly, in Equatorial Guinea, you become a stranger to economic life, to the Fang culture in its linguistic and dietary diversity. Indeed, cities like Bata and Malabo were once seen as "El dorado", attracting many people from neighbouring countries in Central and West Africa in particular. In addition,



Market of Mongdoassi, Bata

becomes a foreigner" (Iranian proverb).

First of all, you become a foreigner in relation to the language. In any case, "when you travel to a country without knowing the language, you are only going to school" (English proverb). At first glance, the Spanish language seems easy, but it is not. But you know what we usually say, "Hard work pays!". With a lot of reading, patience and practice, you can successfully make it.

there are quite a few "corners" here and there where you could buy food and dishes from your home country. But then, at what price? "Market or supermarket products, taxis, restaurants, furniture, etc... In Bata as in Malabo, you pay through the nose for everything": this is what the young journalist Muriel Devey Malu-Malu had already noted in June 2010, in one of her articles published on the Jeune Afrique website. Here we are in 2020, nothing has changed: the standard of living is still very high. With



Muriel, let us note that a mobile phone that would cost 35,000 CFA francs (**NB: 1\$ = 587 CFA francs and 1€ = 656 CFA francs**) in Cameroon, for example, would cost not less than 100,000 CFA francs in Bata. The same is true for food. A kilogram of meat is worth 5,000 CFA francs in Equatorial Guinea, compared to 300 CFA francs in Chad, or between 1,500 and 2,300 CFA francs in Cameroonian cities. A taxi ride costs 300 CFA francs, and a simple omelette in a restaurant costs at least 2,000 CFA francs. As for the price of a hotel room, count between 130,000 and 200,000 CFA francs for a night (according to a compatriot who recently stayed at the Ibis Hotel in Bata in November 2019).

You understand that it is not with a catechist's salary that some foreigners receive, or in our case, a small stipend that you could afford to do some crazy things in terms of expenses or, better still, help the other needy people. Helping as much as we can, that's all we can do. As a foreigner in Equatorial Guinea, don't expect people to see you and treat you differently. Sartrean philosophy seems to have been well studied in this country, at least by the majority: "Hell is the other people". It is a victim of xenophobic comments that speaks to you. According to a survey of some foreigners, it would seem that the situation has even improved a lot. In 2004, the President of the Republic, Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema, himself stated that "...the inhabitants complain that they no longer have jobs because of foreigners. ». This had resulted in the forced deportation of several foreigners, with their consciences marked, injured by arrests, torture and rape. Let not this description of the economic and social reality of life in Equatorial Guinea frighten you! There are many other things to see, to discover!

But in order to appease what has been said, you need to integrate some maxims of wisdom: "If you judge people, you don't have time to love them" (Mother Teresa). "Who cannot forget, cannot live with others" (Mother Teresa). "Don't be afraid of the weight of daily life, of the weight of the difficult situations that some of you have to go through. We venerate the Holy Cross, instrument and sign of our salvation. Whoever escapes the Cross escapes the Resurrection!" exclaimed Pope Francis in his homily before the Catholic clergy and consecrated people of Egypt on April 29, 2017.

**Brother Parfait Francis FADANKA,  
District of Central Africa.**

# FEAST OF 15 MAY AT THE INSTITUT SAINTE FAMILLE MAHAMASINA OF THE DISTRICT OF ANTANANARIVO

Dear Brothers and Sisters, dear Lasallians, 70 years after our Holy Founder was proclaimed "*patron saint of all Christian educators*" by Pope Pius XII, De La Salle's legacy continues to live on throughout the world. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we Lasallians, have been creative in expressing our gratitude to De La Salle as a pioneer of popular education. Through our words,



gestures, and actions, through the "*school for all*", the one that must educate as well as teach, we continue to transform the lives of thousands of young people. We continue to honour him for founding our Institute and inspiring the Brothers and their partners in their role as ambassadors of Jesus Christ to children and young people. Due to the health emergency caused by Covid-19, almost all countries have taken the decision to temporarily close schools. However, some countries have given the opportunity to the examination classes to go back to school. This was the case of our country, Madagascar. At the Institut Sainte Famille (ISF), we have reopened our doors since Monday, May 4th. So, what have we done to

celebrate this 70th anniversary? First of all, an excerpt from the message of Brother Superior General: "*During this crisis, may our mutual support and solidarity with one another be a sign of hope for others*"<sup>6</sup>. This helped us to broaden the stimulus of our reflection. On this very day, all the educators of ISF gathered in the chapel for a celebration of the Word. This was followed by the intervention of



Brother Director, TOLOJANAHARY Zo Michel. His presentation focused initially on "The Lasallian Educator in the footsteps of the Founder, John Baptist de La Salle". He then presented the Lasallian response to Covid19: numerous initiatives of Lasallian entities throughout the world. In the same spirit, the Institut Sainte Famille offered to all its personnel a food pack #LASALLECOVID19 as a gesture of solidarity and support. In addition, teachers who had not received salary for two months also received an envelope of fifty thousand ariary. Finally, we the four De La Salle Brothers celebrated the feast in our community, starting with a prayer followed by a fraternal agape. Following in De La Salle's footsteps, we promised to move forward "together and by association" in educational action, in our complementarities, taking care of one another with fidelity and zeal.

**Brother Jean Délar LAVA,**  
**District of Antananarivo**

<sup>6</sup> Message from Brother Robert, Superior General, on the Covid-19 pandemic

## IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19, FRATERNITY IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE

Sometimes life holds surprises and leads us to ask the question of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) Yes, of course! Here in Rwanda, this has been almost three months since

happened to be absent from these community exercises.

The experience of an "idle" life would seem strange to us, but when one is a Brother everything is



we have been confined because of Covid-19. Our daily life was punctuated by the apostolate and of course the community prayers from which we drew our spiritual strength. We also met for fraternal meals animated by sharing on our apostolic experiences. With the apostolic demands, one or the other Brother

possible. During these days when Covid-19 makes the whole world tremble, I experience a whole new life. I get up and all my fellow Brothers are present for a fraternal greeting. All the community exercises are opportunities for me to learn to love my brothers much more. We have enough time to be together, to

tease each other, to play cards, to share our different knowledge and prayer gives us back this taste for living together. I understand that the closer I get to my Brother, the more I learn to be patient and to accept him as he is and he also accepts me as I am. We become each other's "keepers" by contributing to each other's joy and happiness. My neighbour's droughts, sorrows and joys are also mine. When the schools closed, everyone had to go home. The majority of our students, whose parents depend only on daily work to provide for their families, had to return home knowing that life would be difficult for them but they had no choice. Like the rest of the population, our neighbours are suffering from hunger so the community tried to help a few number of them. The children are idle and the parents, not knowing how to help them, are worried about an uncertain future. How can I help them? Our Holy Founder speaks to us of total abandonment to God in times of sorrow and drought. (Med. 20) Inspired by this meditation, I understood that when everything seems impossible for men, God remains the only refuge. Given the persistence and the importance of the needs in the area, apart from the small contribution of my community, I could only give these people my moral and spiritual support, share their sorrow, and bring them to the Lord in my prayer. Our daily sharing in community always reflects this reality that surrounds us, and to tell the truth, the fact is that we also miss our students. It is true that the world is suffering and we do not know how to console it. Our Founder reminds us: "When, in your sorrows, you have had recourse to those who lead you, and who have not been able to provide the proper remedy, God then wants you to stand in complete abandonment to his

guidance" (Med. 20.3). May we surrender ourselves to God and offer him this world in distress, and may community life revive in us that fraternity which does not think of itself only but of its neighbour, of the whole of human race! If this is possible then, Jesus will live in our hearts forever!



**Brother Jean Paul NIYONSHUTI**

**Delegation of Rwanda**

# FRATELLI PROJECT IN THE DAYS OF THE CORONAVIRUS

**A**s in all countries on all continents, the Coronavirus disease, called Covid-19, has appeared in the Middle East, more precisely in Lebanon in this year 2020. Patient zero is an imported case, which came from Iran on February 21, 2020. A week later, several contact cases were



reported positive in two regions of the country. This forces the education authorities to close schools and universities as of 3 March 2020. Since that date, the activities of the Fratelli Project, as a socio-educational centre, have also been suspended. It is impossible for us to take in children for our leisure programmes such as school and pre-school support. All this month of March, we have kept our doors and windows closed for our own safety and out of respect for government measures. The many families of the refugees, like all the inhabitants of Lebanon, remained confined to their camps and shelters. Some refugee camps are guarded by municipal police officers to prevent any hazardous exit of the inhabitants. Locking people who earn their daily bread by going to work in other people's homes on a daily basis for more than 30 days is tantamount to depriving them of any source of income that would enable them to survive at best. Women, children, old people, adults, sick and healthy people, staying cloistered in "houses" that are not always clean and badly ventilated, is a real difficulty that these many

refugee families in Lebanon are experiencing. Faced with the new needs, given the grievances and the urgency presented to us by those in charge of the shelters and the heads of families, it was necessary to try to bring a concrete response by "going beyond the borders" of the ordinary activities of Fratelli Project, made impossible in this time of Coronavirus.

To do this, three urgent and concrete humanitarian actions were initiated. In view of the possibilities offered by the annual budget of the project (no transportation, no students present for snacks, no activities to consume the lines of supplies and school equipment ...). It has taken some imagination and adaptation to meet these new local and urgent needs that we summarize here in three action points:

First action for our students who are confined to their homes: how to be present to them despite the distance imposed by the confinement? The Project coordination team and the Fratelli community have undertaken to produce 90-second videos to express to the children that we are present and we hope to welcome them as soon as possible. This will take place twice a week. In this way, we have accompanied more than 650 children and young people through the social networks Facebook and WhatsApp. Started at the end of March, this activity runs until the end of May.

Second action for the families of the hungry students: with the confinement, it is impossible for parents to go out to look for the daily bread and the minimum of hygienic material that the families need. We then undertook to offer each family a pack of various basic foodstuffs (beans, rice, oil, sugar, flour, lentils, canned food...) and another pack composed of soaps, detergent, hydro alcoholic gel, sanitary towels,

shampoo, garbage plastic... We distributed, with the agreement of the Municipalities and General Security, more than 1.800 packs to the families of the refugees (Syrian, Palestinian and Iraqi) and some Lebanese families. For Muslim families, this help was more than appreciated as it came at the right time for the holy month of Ramadan. The programme covered the whole month of May, despite the confinement. Each family also received a children's toy kit consisting of gadgets, balloons to inflate, colouring books, pencils and flipcharts for drawing ....

Third action for "Baby kit": With the border closures, certain foodstuffs and pharmaceutical products that are essential to preserve life for the most vulnerable have become untraceable, if not inaccessible to the poorest. This is particularly the case of milk for infants. New-borns in this time of Coronavirus pandemics, and whose mothers cannot breastfeed normally, are the most exposed to this shortage or high cost of infant milk. So Fratelli Project has launched a new program to help this category, which is one of the most exposed and vulnerable to the direct consequences of Covid-19. It is called the "Baby Kit" program. From June 1 for three months, as a humanitarian assistance project, Fratelli wants to bring relief and assistance to children from 0 to 3 years of age, allowing some of the poorest and most vulnerable families to benefit from a few cans of infant milk, baby diapers and talcum powder against itch in this summer season. This new programme to respond to the humanitarian emergency of small children will be supervised by a paediatrician during these three months.

Finally, for the end of the confinement, since the students will no longer be able to return to school here in Lebanon, the team of educators is keeping alive the flame of transmitting knowledge. To this end, "summer homework" is being designed and sent every week to the homes of all students enrolled in the programs of Fratelli. Once a week, the educators meet by levels to correct and evaluate the distance learning and propose other homework for the following week. This is the new way of teaching students at a distance, imposed on us by the Coronavirus.

Fraternaly in De La Salle and Marcelin Champagnat whose feast day is celebrated on June 6.



**Brother Gilbert OUILABEGUE**



## **A**griculture

The rains have started in Rumbek, signalling the beginning of farming.

Sadly, it is the first time in our history that Loreto Rumbek is planting groundnuts without the help of our students. Normally, our students begin cultivating our farm before going home for their term break in May. This year, because of the Covid-19 outbreak, our students are no longer on our compound and we are using a tractor to help with the planting process. Our local workers have cultivated groundnuts and we are looking forward to an abundant harvest this year.

### **Distance Learning**

Although our schools are currently closed, learning continues at Loreto Rumbek. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, learning institutions in South Sudan, Uganda and Kenya have closed. As a result, many beneficiaries of the tertiary education and professional development scholarships offered by Loreto Rumbek, have returned to our compound. Here, they are able to continue their studies using online platforms that would be inaccessible in their homes because of limited electricity and internet

infrastructure. Helen Sora, who is studying nursing in Nairobi, is one of 8 people participating in this initiative notes, “We are grateful to have the internet and power that enable us to continue studying.” Abraham and Emmanuel are home from Solidarity with South Sudan Yambio teacher training college and are happy to be able to study online; “though we are home in Rumbek we can continue our studies, this is a great opportunity for us”.

### **GESS Support**

The Covid-19 crisis has increased the risk of forced marriage and early pregnancy for the girls at Loreto Primary School and Loreto Girls Secondary School. Our schools serve as a protective factor for these girls, and during this crisis they are unable to receive the protection usually offered by our school community. As families deal with the negative effects of this crisis on their health and finances, they are likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms such as early/forced marriage. To help girls in this situation, Girls Education South Sudan (GESS) - a DFID program, provides direct cash transfers to girls in our community to help ensure that their needs are met. Loreto Rumbek serves as a disbursement site for these cash transfers. Recently, our female students

were invited back to the compound to receive their cash transfers to support them during this difficult time.

### **Mobile Clinic**

The Mary Ward Health Care Centre has been providing medical outreach to our local communities to ensure access to vital health services. Our nurses and our Covid-19 health education team have been going out into the community as a mobile clinic unit for three days every week. The mobile clinic has focused on communities that are located far from health care facilities to help those who would have to walk very far to access critical care. During outreach sessions, the health education team gives a brief talk explaining the health implications of Covid-19. This is then followed by individual medical care for those gathered. Serious cases are referred to Mary Ward Primary Health Care.

### **Providing Health Support over the Radio**

As the number of Covid-19 cases has increased in South Sudan, it has become very important to educate our communities about ways to prevent the spread of this virus. To reach a larger audience, the Covid-19 health education team supported by the Mary Ward Primary Health Care Clinic has been using radio broadcasts to spread awareness. Each week, Mary Aluel (nurse), Martha Puor (nurse trainee) and Rebecca Atong (graduate intern) have been facilitating a radio broadcast program for two local radio stations - Good News Radio and Rumbek 98 FM. These weekly broadcasts are presented in the local Dinka and Jur Bele languages to target the majority of the population in Rumbek and Wulu. While promoting awareness about the prevention of

Covid-19, these broadcasts also highlight ways to prevent and treatment common ailments such as malaria.

### **Protective Masks**

Homemade cloth masks have been shown to be effective in lowering the risk of transmission of Covid-19. To help prevent the spread of the virus, our graduate interns have been making masks under the supervision of Sr. Baiada at Loreto Rumbek. Sr Baiada has tailoring experience and has made masks for everyone currently living on the Loreto Rumbek compound. For 4 days every week, groups of interns receive training in mask making from Sr. Baiada and each intern is expected to make 10 masks at the end of the training program. Of the 10 masks made by each intern, 5 will be donated to their families, while the other 5 will be donated to the Mary Ward Primary Health Care Clinic.

A Special Thank You to all of the donors, advocates, and supporters of the Loreto Programs in Rumbek. Without your hard work or support none of this would be possible. For more news, & info about the programs, our students, and how you can help, please visit our website: [loretorumbek.ie](http://loretorumbek.ie) and our Facebook page [Loreto Schools Rumbek](https://www.facebook.com/LoretoSchoolsRumbek)

### **Loreto Rumbek Newsletter May 2020**



# VOCATION AND PERSONAL HISTORY

**T**wo questions to begin with:

- As a brother, do you still feel like you are in your own story?

- What makes you think that you are, or have never been, or are no longer in your own story?

Very often, we tolerate our vocations, our actions without accepting them deeply: someone is a teacher without really committing himself; one is a Brother, a Religious, etc. without living it so intimately, interiorly. "Possibly", I think that it is because the person has taken or has begun to take wrong hidden or impure points of support: this is what shows that he is not, is no longer or has never been in his own vocational history, in his present life situation. With these wrong points of support (like a strong taste for great responsibilities, power, material things, money, etc.), their dissatisfaction causes the person, better the Brother, to fall after a few years into regret. That means that there is a truth or a secret that begins to trouble his conscience; a secret that creates guilt because he has a double life. Dissatisfied; it is isolation that begins. You should know the meaning of the sentence: "isolation is the worst kind of counsellor" (Miguel de Unamuno): the confreres become Sartran hells that we must flee from, that we should beware of. Community and spiritual life pays the price for it. Yes, that is what happens when our vocation is marked with pseudo-values or when the person - the Brother - has allowed himself to be phagocytized by the values of our materialistic and World of power. It is normal then that at some point he feels lost in his identity. A vocation is a value that is nourished but not with big dreams (Louise

Marchand). As soon as we begin to nourish it with impure ambitions, we step out of our vocational history and identity. Most people make no serious distinction between vocation and ambition: they just walk systematically to the spot, thinking that they are moving forward. Like robots, they know the different stages of life, propelled by desires, sucked up by biological rhythms that drive them to desire this or that thing and to get restless, to make the devil's hay, and to think that what they have desired happens to them. All this is absurd of course. Those who realize it are setting out to individualize themselves and to find more meaning to this burlesque comedy that we call life, better religious life. To help us, we need to seek in our personal vocation the elements with which we feel true and therefore without which we feel false as Brothers of the Christian Schools, as Educators.

In short, a question for you my Brother: what is the element without which you feel false and cheater in your vocation as a Brother today?

**Brother Parfait Francis FADANKA,  
District of Central Africa**

# 2020 LOCKDOWN

**L**ockdown, Coronavirus, self-isolation, social distancing ...

New words with new meanings and new implications for life as we know it. One hears comments such as: “the world is changing”, “things will never be the same again”...

What is changing and what has changed?

Teachers in well-resourced modern classrooms have upskilled and adapted their curriculum, their teaching methods and their approach to learning in order to keep their teaching going and their learners engaged in the process. Parents have resumed their role as primary caregivers as they work from home and supervise remote learning programmes for their children.

Streets are quiet, shops and businesses are closed, the fear of international recession/depression becomes more of a reality each day.

Governments and leaders are working tirelessly to lessen the effects of the virus, to increase medical care and attention, to make promises to their citizens that they may or may not be able to keep, to think of ways to lessen the devastating economic repercussions.

And what has changed for the poorest of the poor? A stark and cruel understanding of their reality. No food security; decreased opportunities to earn a living and feed their families; the realization of their vulnerability to the virus because of no access to clean, running water; no possibility of social-distancing or self-isolation in their crowded living conditions.....

How do we as Christians respond to the call to “harden not your hearts” during this time of upheaval and introspection?

Social media is abuzz with suggestions for self-help; social, physical and emotional well-being; newscasts tell us of outreach initiatives borne out of people’s own experiences of the virus. But now and again we hear a story that humbles and touches us.

Here in South Africa, I have been inspired and touched by the work of the Tsholofelo Community in Rustenburg. They have opened their doors to a group of homeless men who have been living on the street in the town. The Government promised to find shelters for the homeless during our lockdown period, but that promise did not materialise for these men. The Tsholofelo community had a meeting and discerned that they felt called to invite them in, what a courageous and faith-filled act. This is a community that really does live out the gospel and witness to the word of God, a true example of “harden not your hearts.”

**Mary Hyam,**  
**Sector of South Africa / Lwanga District**

# GUADALUPANAS DE LA SALLE SISTERS: WOODEN JUBILEE IN THE DISTRICT OF THE GULF OF BENIN!

**T**he Guadalupana De La Salle Sisters (SGS) are a branch of the Lasallian family. Present in 13 countries throughout the world, some of them have been established in the District of the Gulf of Benin (DGB) in 2015 and work in association with the Brothers of the Christian Schools at De La Salle Catholic Complex School. Sister Laurencia, Director of the Community, gives some news through this interview conducted during the period of confinement.



**Can you tell us about the arrival of the Sisters in Benin?**

We have been here for five years. How time flies! We arrived in Benin in May 2015. We were 3: Sisters OLINIRINA Lanto Ortancia and ALPHONSE Laurencia from Madagascar and Sister Angela Maria SANCHEZ CASTANO from Mexico. We made community with the Brothers of the Christian Schools for 3 weeks, and then we settled in a rented house. Sister Angela had to go back to her country because of her father's health; that is how Sister FIFI INDIAMBARANTO Michaeline Francesca arrived.

Since then, we have been working with the Brothers at the De La Salle Complex School in Akassato.

**What is the mission of each Sister in the Community and in the School?**

In our community, Sister Laurencia is the Director, Sister Ortancia is the bursar, and Sister Michaeline is the secretary. In the School, we work and especially collaborate with our Brothers of the Christian Schools. Ortancia is the director of the kindergarten, and she is in charge of the class of kindergarten II; Sister Laurencia is involved in the primary and intermediate levels; and Sister Michaeline is a teacher in the kindergarten. We also participate in the catechesis of the children on Wednesday afternoons and a Sister accompanies the Young Lasallians of the College. We carry out our mission with FAITH and ZEAL as Saint Jean-Baptiste De La Salle recommends.

**You have been occupying new premises for a few days now. How long have you been in your own community?**



The Lord has given us a beautiful house. He has allowed us to move there on the day of His Divine

Mercy. We have been in the new community since Sunday, April 19, 2020.

**Can you locate it for us in relation to the Brothers' Community?**

It is not far from the Community of our Brothers. The house is about five minutes' walk.

***How do you live this period of Confinement in the Community?***

We lived the period of confinement by respecting the measures given by the Beninese Government and by the Church. We have been working at home since the closure of the schools. As occupation, we follow an ongoing formation on Mariology given by the Institute, and the study of the Rule. We have also taken advantage of this time of confinement to move and settle in the new house.

***How do you organize community prayer in this time of quarantine?***

For prayer, we follow the Mass on KTO (French Catholic Television) every morning, and then the Morning Prayer and we go about our other daily activities. This period of confinement is also an opportunity to share times of prayer and fraternal communion. On Sundays, we pray with the Brothers in their Community. During the Easter Triduum, we prayed together and attended Easter Mass in the parish. Sharing these moments between Brothers and Sisters is a testimony of Faith and Fraternity for Lasallians. I would like, through this opportunity you have given me, to say thank you to the Brother Director and to all our Brothers and Sisters for this beautiful testimony.

***Do you have any particular difficulties with regard to the interruption of classes at the School?***

With regard to the interruption of classes, we are just concerned about our students. We are thinking about how they are living the situation in their families. The supervision at home, given that not all of them can afford private classes at home.

***Have you kept in touch with any of your students, parents or collaborators?***

We have kept in touch with the parents. Some of them call us to talk about their children who wish to see the Sisters again and return to school.

***Do you have any aspirants for your Congregation?***

Yes, we have aspirants here in Benin and in Burkina Faso. For those who are in their families and studying, we have 18 in total. Fifteen (15) from Burkina and three (3) from Benin. Some of them are students in secondary school and others are at university level. We have already sent three (3) aspirants in formation to Rwanda, including two (2) from Burkina Faso and one (1) from Benin.



***What have you learnt after five years of mission and collaboration with the Brothers in the DGB?***

It is five (5) years of joy shared with our Brothers and collaborators. Five years of adventures, five years of challenges. It is the work of the Lord; we are only simple servants and we realise what we have to do it with joy and love for the Glory of God and the salvation of souls. The Brothers welcomed us well and we always have perfect collaboration both with them and with the other collaborators of all the Lasallian schools of the District of the Gulf of Benin. We thank the Lord for everything. Moreover, we still feel ready to carry out his mission in the midst of the children and our Lasallian family.

Thank you Sister, for your availability.

**Interview by Nadège LAMBONI,  
District of the Gulf of Benin**

# THE SAINT PAUL POSTULANCY OF RUKOMO IN RWANDA



## **B**rief history and location:

The Saint Paul community of Rukomo is a formation house of the Delegation of Rwanda. Administratively, it is located in the Eastern Province, in the District of Nyagatare. Rukomo is located in the North-East in the region formerly called Umutara, a savannah area where was established the Akagera National Park that is being progressively reduced to a minimum. It belongs to the Catholic Diocese of Byumba, precisely to the parish of Rukomo.

It was in 1982 that the idea of having a piece of land and building a Brothers' house on it was born. The land is 18ha 25a. built from 1985 onwards with the help of two Districts of Belgium and the Centre of the Institute. The community was inaugurated on 26 December 1986 by the former Brother Superior General, José Pablo BASTERRECHEA (May he rest in peace!) in the company of two Brothers Visitors from Belgium.

Activities and mission: the community is responsible for offering basic formation to young people who want to commit themselves to the religious life of the

FSC. Since 1986, it has welcomed postulants every year before they continue their formation in the novitiate. In the beginning, these young people, like the Brothers, did their apostolate in the primary school and in two secondary schools in the surrounding area: SOPEM of Rukomo (private school) and the Agri-Veterinary School (EAV) of Nyagatare (public school) as well as in the Integrated Rural and Agricultural Education Centre of Rukomo (CERAI). For self-sufficiency, the community had carried out some projects such as planting fruit trees. They also developed pig farming, dairy cows and the processing of agricultural products (jam, pineapple wine). This worked well until 1991, when the community closed its doors after the war that began in October 1990. After the resumption in 2006, replacing the diocesan Caritas, which occupied the premises between 1995 and 2005, the community continued its formation and production activities in the context of the "new Rwanda".

Today, we have six postulants (three in second year, eagerly awaiting to join the novitiate in Burkina Faso, and three others in first year) accompanied by three Brother Formators. The mission of the community, with its actualization, consists in "... the formation of the postulants and the farming activities on the property belonging to the Delegation. »

Some objectives: To accompany young people in their vocational search and postulants in their preparation for religious and Lasallian life. To train children and young people who are preparing for the sacraments of Christian initiation in the parish. To participate in the accompaniment of Catholic youth groups in the parish. To welcome the Legion of Mary who comes to pray in the community. To animate the

young people of the neighbourhood by organizing sports, especially football. To make the agricultural property more profitable by renewing the crops. When the seasons are good, harvests are abundant.

Challenges: The limitation of our mission and our influence, because it is a formation house without another work of application. The structure seems small and a little old, which does not allow to welcome a greater number of young people. It is difficult to organize an inter-postulancy meeting because of the lack of other houses of religious formation in the area. Leisure time is limited, due to the lack of sports facilities and adequate equipment. The learning of the French language is very difficult, due to the lack of appropriate materials. The use of both Kinyarwanda and English in schools inevitably brings some obstacles! Attempts to help with tutoring, especially for primary school children, encounter so many obstacles, such as premises, convenient hours, etc., that they are not always easy. Adult literacy is possible, but very difficult to achieve.

In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has disrupted so many things, the formation is continuing. As far as our internal organization is concerned, nothing has stopped. An aspirant of the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption is taking French and Christian formation courses. By the grace of God, everything is going better and better! Thank you for your prayers and your support! We too do not forget all Lasallians! We are together in de La Salle!

**Brother P. Célestin Ntagisanimana.**

**Director of the Postulancy/ Rwanda**

# BOHICON: END OF SCHOOL YEAR AND THANKSGIVING



**A**fter the confinement that lasted from 27 March to 11 May 2020, schools have reopened their doors in Benin in order to complete the 2019-2020 school year. Although the resumption of classes has brought both relief and anguish, today the experience remains positive and encouraging. Since 11 May, the students of the Monseigneur Steinmetz School in Bohicon (Benin) have resumed classes with great joy, and the teachers

in order to prepare the candidates for the different national exams. The official exams are scheduled for the month of July. It is impressive to see that this post-confinement time, which saw the resumption of classes, went well. Certainly, it is the joy of the whole educational community to see that the year has been saved, but above all it is necessary to see the hand of God behind this successful completion of the school year. Faith in God erases the fear of evil, and the wonder is there before our eyes. Happy holidays to some and better concentration to others.



with great enthusiasm. The joy and the enthusiasm have made it possible to support each other in order to remain positive in the face of Covid-19. The teachers were able to complete the programmes of their teaching subjects with the students. This made it possible to begin the exams of the last term in the week of 2 to 4 June 2020 for the intermediate classes. A national and diocesan mock exam were organized



**Brother Guillaume YAME,  
District of the Gulf of Benin**

