

RELAF NEWSLETTER N°36

Brothers of the Christian Schools



Lasallian Region of Africa



September 2020

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Chief editor: Br. Pierre OUATTARA

Assistant editors: Br Ferdinand BIZIYAREMYE & Br Joan SALA COLL

Infography and Translation: Br Etienne Sombéwendé SAWADOGO

To send articles: relaf@lasalle.org

WebSite: www.relaf.info

EDITORIAL

LET'S BE CONTAGIOUS!

LThese days, we live in fear of contaminating or being contaminated by a virus. Can we still think contagion in a positive way? What do we have **the desire to transmit in our heart as educator?** In order for our life to **make sense**, or at least to **be a sign**, we must have a clear awareness of what we want to transmit. What do we have to say to those entrusted to us? Do our teachings, our behavior, our presence give them the desire to be good, to be better than they are?

We have the opportunity, through our zeal, our professional competence and our proximity, to communicate to our students the love of what we teach, our faith, our love of the Word of God, the sense of solidarity with the most deprived, the desire to be useful to their community and beneficial to nature...

How do we, or what do we do, to be positively contagious? We are probably already a little bit contagious. Of course, no one can command contagion, but to be contaminated, one must expose oneself. We are therefore contagious according to the people we visit frequently. "Tell me who you visit frequently and I'll tell you who you are," says the proverb. Who or what do we use to visit? Do we meet frequently God in prayer, in his Word, in the Eucharist? Do we frequent John Baptist De La Salle, some lives of saints, through some spiritual writings? This is the story of a grandmother to whom a little girl revealed her identity or, if you prefer, her status. "With Christmas coming, Grandma was out shopping for gifts for her grandchildren. While she was at the toy store going through her list and carefully selecting gifts, she noticed a small homeless girl outside wistfully looking inside the store. Grandma's heart went out to this little girl. She invited her into the store and asked her to pick out a gift for herself. As they walked out of the store, the little girl held Grandma's hand, looked into her kind eyes and asked. "Are you God?" Grandma, somewhat embarrassed and somewhat touched, said, "No, my dear, I am not God." "Then who are you?" continued the little girl. Grandma thought for a moment and said, "I am a child of God." The little girl, fully satisfied and smiling, said, "I knew there was a connection."¹ Let us therefore take dispositions to be contaminated by the goodness that God communicates to us through Jesus Christ. John Baptist De La Salle himself invites us to do this: « *This will be the glory of my Father, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. What Jesus Christ says to his holy Apostles² he also says to you, that you may understand that all the good you are able to do in your work for those entrusted to you will be true and effective only insofar as Jesus Christ gives it his blessing and you remain united with him. It is the same for you as it is for the branch of the vine, which can bear fruit only if it remains attached to the main stem and draws its sap and strength from the vine, which is also the source of all the goodness of the fruit.* »³

Yours in De La Salle, Br Pierre OUATTARA

¹ Cf. The book of Paul Coutinho, sj, St Paul Press Training School, Mumbai 2012.

² Jn 15, 4.8

³ Meditation 195, 3.

TESTIMONY: THE EXPLOSION IN BEIRUT ON 4 AUGUST 2020



It was 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, August 4, 2020, when I left the Fratelli Centre in Rmeileh for the Sacred Heart High School in Gemmayze, located less than two kilometres (as the crow flies) from the harbour of Beirut. That day, the accountant of the Fratelli Association and I had a long working session until 12:30 pm. The persistent difficulties linked to the fall of the Lebanese pound (the local currency) against the US dollar, the contribution and involvement of Fratelli with transparency in this difficult context, how to continue to support disadvantaged Lebanese families in this crisis that is still lasting. All this, without forgetting our target, which is the Syrian and Iraqi refugees, were the

subjects of our open-ended discussion that morning in Beirut. From Sacred Heart High School, I went to Saint Vincent de Paul School located in the northern suburbs of Beirut in the Bourj Hammoud (B.H) neighbourhood. In the five-storey building, the Fratelli Centre of B.H. is housed on the fourth floor. I had the joy of seeing the about twenty Iraqi children who returned to the Fratelli Centre for summer activities. After an hour's exchange with the children, I learned that many families have been able to leave Lebanon for exile in Canada and Australia. It was 2 p.m. when we left there with the hope of meeting again on Friday, and so on until the end of August.

The last step of my day in Beirut on August 4th was a visit to the Hyundai concessionaire for the periodic revision and maintenance of the project Fratelli' vehicle. At 3.30 pm, I set off on my return journey via the Highway of the harbour of Beirut. After a stop at the Directorate of General Security where I was able to collect my new resident permit, I returned to the community in Rmeileh shortly before 6 pm local time. At 6.8pm, a strong vibration violently shook the doors and windows of the community, followed by two very loud bursts. I rushed to the terrace of the community looking for a glimpse in the air of the Israeli air force, who use to have aerial exercises over the city of Sidon (Saida). The little children of the neighbourhood started to shout: Israel, Israel, Israel ... We are more than 40 km from the place of the explosion. After more than twenty minutes of hesitation and phone calls from colleagues to ensure them that I was back from Beirut and to announce an attack on the house of the former prime minister (Saad HARIRI), it was around 6.38pm that the first images were broadcast on social networks announcing a bombing next to Beirut and the huge explosion that followed. At 8:30 pm, I called the Brothers of the community of Sacred Heart from Gemmayze. Fortunately, of the six Brothers living in the community the day before, two took the plane during the night for holidays in Egypt and Mexico, the other two left in the afternoon to spend the summer in the mountains. Only two Brothers remained in the house at the time of the explosion. Thank God, the two Brothers were safe and sound. However, there were no more doors or windows in any of the rooms or offices. The blast from the harbour of Beirut had blown apart everything,

including the large steel gate. The shards of glass had injured some members of the High school security. Fortunately, there were no fatalities.

Later in the evening, we learned that the explosion had damaged the three high schools belonging to the Brothers. The most affected of the three was the Sacred Heart High School, which one had lost almost everything, as it was located near the harbour of Beirut. All the buildings, classrooms, administration, chapel, the Brothers' community, the offices of the provincial house, everything was blown upside down; the papers and machines in all the offices were knocked over. It is exactly like the whole city of Beirut that I will discover 48 hours after the terrible and resounding explosion of August 4th at 6:08 pm.

The days after the explosion:

The first day after the explosion, we took the time to try to understand what really happened. Social networks, local and international media, newsletters and any source of information that could tell us what had happened the day before were reviewed all the daylong. In the evening, a first official statement from the government gave us an idea about the origin of the explosion. A quantity of ammonium nitrate, more than 2750 tons, stored in hangar 12 of the harbour of Beirut, was the official cause of the explosion. What could have started the fire that had spread to hangar 12? What had happened to cause this double detonation? Many hypotheses were put forward, but none of them was satisfactory. All of us were waiting for the results of the official investigation initiated by the government. The government had promised to publish it within four days; we are still waiting for

these results as we are starting the month of September.

From our part as a community and as Fratelli project members, we undertook to reflect on the concrete



actions, to carry out in the field. What can we do? On Thursday morning, the second day after the explosion, we went to Fratelli Bourj-Hammoud. On the one hand, we went to see the damage to the building and clean the glass debris from the fourth floor occupied by Fratelli; on the other hand, we met with the owner of the building, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, to discuss the modalities of repair. Unfortunately, no insurance in the building covers such an explosion," said the person in charge, who was very moved and touched. Repairs will be carried out using own funds. Therefore, no work will be carried out before two months, the time to assess the damage and prepare the consequent estimates. We

came out of it, disappointed and saddened. We also wanted to know if it would be possible to continue the summer activities underway with the Iraqi children. Due to force majeure, there will be no children coming until the next school year in October 2020.

On the third day after the explosion, we as the coordination team went to Beirut city centre. We visited the various stands and sheds of NGOs and all the private organisations, which are working directly with the victims. It is a veritable humanitarian assistance "souk" on Martyrs Square in the heart of Beirut, a few kilometres from the harbour. We also visited the school of the Sacred Heart Brothers in Gemmayze. That school is located in a short distance from the harbour, which was destroyed, except for the concrete, which resisted the blast. We spoke with some volunteers and leaders of the Scouts, the Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM) and the Catholic Youth who deployed to help in the damaged houses in the majority of the destroyed area. Christians, who lost everything in a few minutes after the explosion, inhabit Mar Mikael (Saint Michael).

On the fourth day, we collected some addresses of the leaders of the groups working with the victims of the explosion. We had to find the time to sit down and talk. This was to gather the needs expressed and analyse them in order to initiate actions in connection with these direct actors on the ground with the victims.

In dialogue with the International Solidarity Secretariat in Rome, we selected the following priority lines of action:

- a) To offer 1200 hot meals daily for three weeks: in collaboration with one of the Jesuit Fathers'

programmes "Bread that seeks Hunger" and a Christian Association "Offer Joy", we have committed ourselves to providing the necessary foodstuff to serve 1200 hot meals daily to families living in various damaged areas of Beirut. The programme had no set menu. We asked them to draw up one each week so that we make the necessary orders for the meals to be prepared each day by a restaurant owner. Then a team of 4 to 5 of our staff would go to the field in Beirut to serve the hot dishes. This commitment lasted from the 10th to the 31st of August 2020. A total of 25,200 hot dishes were served to the families of the victims.

b) To work together to provide necessities to 150 Christian families: Catholic schools decided to open their classrooms to welcome families who lost their homes in the explosion. After a week, it became clear that these families were finding it difficult to leave the damaged houses to live elsewhere. They prefer to stay there despite the absence of doors and windows. In relation with Caritas Lebanon, the Pastoral Ministry team of the Marist College of Jbail has identified 150 families and drawn up a list of basic needs. The Fratelli Project took it upon itself to buy and send 26 products to the Marist Pastoral Ministry, which, together with Caritas Lebanon, made small packets and distributed them to the families concerned. These included bottles of clean water, bags of coffee, tinned

food, salt, rice, oil, lentils, detergents, hydro-alcoholic gel, etc. The products were distributed to the families concerned.

c) To assist the pupils benefiting from Fratelli's programmes in the Bourj-Hammoud centre; this neighbourhood is one of the most deprived in the suburbs of Beirut. Armenian Christians and other refugees who share the same belief inhabit it. We work with nearly 87 families who participate in Fratelli's programmes in this Centre. In solidarity with all these families, Fratelli has offered a food package consisting of various foodstuffs for each family. In addition, a list of 40 deprived families from St. Vincent de Paul Lasallian School, with whom we share the same building, have benefited from these packages. In addition, some 60 poor families, cared for by the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in the Bourj-Hammoud District, received these food packages.

d) To provide small equipment in the houses after their rehabilitation: still in collaboration with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, a list of supplies and small equipment for the houses is under study for the families who lost everything in the explosion. This involves buying and donating equipment such as mattresses, bed sheets, curtains, microwave ovens, refrigerators, television screens, plates, glasses, spoons and mirrors in the damaged houses, or even having doors or windows repaired...

e) To contribute to the health care costs of our students or their families, direct victims of the explosion. We are in the process of identifying students from Lasallian or Marist schools and their families directly affected by the explosion. At the moment, we have eight cases reported to us: two



employees of the school of the Sacred Heart Brothers, two employees of Fratelli Bourj-Hammoud, one student of Fratelli Boourj-Hammoud with a broken leg, one student and his uncle from the Collège de Frères Notre Dame de Furn-Chebbak, and one student from the Collège Sacré-Cœur. There have also been cases of former students, at least one of whom died on 4 August 2020. In short, we continue to work to see concretely the help to be provided to these victims who are close to us in spirit and charisma. Proyde is in the process of mobilising funds to support this action. In conclusion, after this double explosion in Beirut which, according to the latest news, has left nearly 200 dead and more than 6500 injured, the challenge for the Fratelli Project is to get a little closer to the Lebanese people and to be able to respond to their needs due to the economic crisis and growing poverty in the country. The Fratelli Project is dedicated to refugee and displaced children from the war in Lebanon. Today, more than ever before, the Lebanese are experiencing the same needs as refugees. This explosion has given the Fratelli Project the opportunity to collaborate with a third congregation in its direct interventions. From two congregations of Marist and Lasallian Brothers, we worked closely with the Society of Jesus (the Jesuit Fathers) during the three weeks of joint humanitarian action. The Provincial of the Mediterranean Province of the Jesuit Fathers (Malta, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria), during one of his visits to us, was keen to encourage this initiative and hoped that it would be extended to areas other than ongoing humanitarian action. Fratelli as an inter-congregational project remains open to collaboration with other religious institutes. Finally, we entrust to your humble prayers the rest of the souls

of the victims of the explosion of August 4th in Beirut. Above all, let us pray for the survivors so that they may regain strength and courage to rebuild their community life by relying on God and his many witnesses of Fraternity in this part of the Middle East, which is very sensitive to the question of religions.



F. Gilbert O.

Fratelli Project, Lebanon



In Benin, as elsewhere, the Brothers of the Christian Schools are most often assimilated to their schools. This reference to Lasallian schools is mainly due to the success and excellence they embody. Nevertheless, beware; the hidden side of this academic success is based above all on coaching. This approach, once again put in place by the Collège Monseigneur Steinmetz (Bishop Steinmetz School) of Bohicon and Collège Catholique De La Salle (De La Salle Catholic School) of Akassato, has enabled us to achieve excellence, success in Benin's national exams. Indeed, the performance achieved through the results we got in the Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle (grade 9) and the Baccalauréat (grade 12) examinations has aroused a surge of pride in both Lasallian schools. Each of these schools has proved that La Salle goes with excellence. The Collège Monseigneur Steinmetz of Bohicon has achieved 100% of success in both grade 9 and grade 12 examinations. Collège Catholique La Salle of Akassato, from its side made a 100% of success for grade 9 examination. It had only one failure in grade 12 examination, which gives a score of 91.03% in the Baccalaureate. These results place the Collège Monseigneur Steinmetz of Bohicon first in the ranking at the national level for the grade 12 examination all options combined. The Collège Catholique La Salle of Akassato took second place in the national ranking in the literature (A2) option.

Behind these good intellectual competencies lies a Saint, John Baptist de La Salle, who inspires sacrifice, discipline, hard work and the acceptance of the child in all his humanly being. Congratulations to all those involved in Lasallian education for these very encouraging achievements. An Olympic champion who has climbed the podium for the first time will tell you that winning a silver medal after a gold medal can be hard to swallow. See you next year again for great achievements.



Brother Guillaume YAME,

District of the Gulf of Benin

MEET THE NEW DIRECTOR OF DE LA SALLE SCHOLASTICATE NAIROBI

Brother Wole Olabanjo hails from Nigeria, one of the few Brothers who had the privilege of experiencing Novitiate in Congo Kinshasa. With the current composition of the Scholasticate Community with Brothers from both French and English speaking, Brother Wole comes in as an experienced Brother to marry the diverse cultures. Brother clocks 21 years in perpetual vows having pronounced them 4th September 1999, in



Ondo, Nigeria. He is not a total stranger to De La Salle Scholasticate having been on the staff far back in 1998-1999 as he completed his studies in CTIE then. Upon his return to Nigeria in 1999, he took office as Postulant Director. Brother Wole was the postulant director when the District ran one postulancy programme in Nigeria and he was able to handle postulants from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and of course Nigeria.

capacities within the Sector of Nigeria; Rector of St Peter's Minor Seminary in Northern Nigeria and later principal of Mt La Salle College a co-educational institution in the Middle Belt, Benue State in Nigeria. He was the first principal of Mater Ecclesia College in Lagos. Br Wole comes to the Scholasticate with a wealth of administrative experiences in both formation and educational institutions to propel the formation experience in the Scholasticate.

The De La Salle Scholasticate welcome Brother Wole Olabanjo and wish him a successful experience.



Bro Uchenna Ilozue

Lwanga District

OVERVIEW OF THE RECENT HAPPENINGS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Pandemic', 'isolation', 'quarantine', 'lockdown', 'virus', 'how are you?' 'keep safe', are words and expressions that have become part of our everyday parlance since COVID-19 invaded the world. Our Lasallian world has not been spared the anxiety or the need to make changes, but in the spirit of the Founder we have all looked for ways to ensure that we continue the work of our mission. South Africa has been no different.



September is the start of spring and sees the return to school after a month's holiday. Spring is a season of new beginnings, new life and hope. The move to Lockdown Level 2 has meant that we could welcome all the learners back on to the College campus. Strict precautions are in place to ensure the safety of the community.

What did we learn during lockdown?

Despite the many challenges, teaching and learning continued. We worked in new ways and our problem-solving skills improved, our technological skills expanded, we continued to communicate with each other thanks to Zoom, Google Meets and other such platforms. We found novel ways to stay entertained.

Where have we found God and how have we kept our faith alive?



We celebrated Mandela Day by organizing collections of food and warm clothing for those in need.

Lockdown coincided with the arrival of the cold weather and during this time many people lost their regular income.

Our College community came together to support the Holy Cross Youth Care Centre in Cape Town which was damaged by a fire in July. Clothing, bedding and mattresses were donated to the young girls who lost all their belongings when their dormitory burnt down.

The DLSHCC community and alumni with the support of MacDonalds Victory Park, raised funds to install running water at a daycare centre in Soweto.

Students were encouraged to journal or write poetry. Some of them created sacred spaces in their homes, others showed appreciation to their families by preparing a meal or a special treat.

Mary Hyam

South Africa

LIFE AT DE LA SALLE SCHOLASTICATE NAIROBI IN THIS COVID19 PERIOD

This article is a reflection on our life together at De La Salle International Scholasticate, Nairobi, Kenya. It focuses on some aspects that make community worth living and our studies at Tangaza University College, enjoyable despite COVID-19: Prayer Life, Community Life, and our Studies in the University. There are 25 student Brothers in the community, from about ten different African countries. The Community daily activities start with meditation,



Morning Prayer and Holy Mass. The community is blessed with three Priests from Eritrea, South Sudan and Nigeria that reside in the community, while studying at the university. With their presence, daily Mass is a guarantee. Besides the daily spiritual activities, there is monthly recollection, where a Priest or a Religious is invited to give an input. The Priests with the Brothers in the community organize online Sunday Mass and daily evening Rosary recitation for the families of our students. While the chapel is the spiritual power hub of the community, the dining is the power house of the community. It is a place where Brothers replenish their physical energy. Before COVID-19, Brothers had breakfast and supper in the community from Monday to Friday, and had lunch in the campus. However, with the closure of all academic campuses, Brothers have all their meals in the community. Special thanks to the community dedicated, hardworking, and committed cooks who give us

balanced diet to fortify our immune system against COVID-19.

De La Salle International Scholasticate is a community of student Brothers pursuing various academic disciplines at Tangaza University College, Nairobi. Unfortunately, all physical academic works came to an abrupt end in March 2020 because of the

pandemic. However, online classes continue since then. Very soon, Brothers will be starting their third semester exam online. The student

Brothers are grateful to the community for the support received to facilitate the virtual learning. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, so goes the adage. Despite the hectic virtual learning from 8:30am till 5:00pm daily, the Brothers do not undermine physical exercise. The community makes provision for various sporting activities and encourages all Brothers to participate in them: football, basketball, the Pool, Table tennis, weight lifting and jogging. De La Salle Center, Nairobi, the official name of the Scholasticate, is grateful to Almighty God for keeping us safe from COVID-19 since it started. We commend the effort of all the Brothers for keeping safe and comply with the community regulations against the pandemic. We are grateful to all our sponsors and pray God to continue protecting us all from the pandemic. We pray that God heal our land.

Brother Urbain (FSC)
Scholasticate/Nairobi

DISTRICT OF THE GULF OF BENIN: SIGNUM FIDEI SPIRITUAL RETREAT,

As from the example of Jesus, Master of the Mission, who invited the disciples to go aside and to pray, Jacques MONCHEBI, Formator and Director of the Inter-African Novitiate of Bobo-Dioulasso accompanied me in the spiritual retreat at the end of the academic year. A virtual spiritual retreat which took place at the Provincial House of Lomé, and preached by the animator from Bobo Dioulasso from Monday 27th July to Saturday 1st August 2020, on the theme "Go into deep water and lower

your nets, with Jesus Christ: great things are possible". Brother Jacques was inspired by the Gospel according to Saint Luke 5, 1-11; the Lasallian Reflection 5; the Signum Fidei Style of Life and Meditation N°196 for the Time of the Retreat of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. The teachings received revolved around four questions: What is the current educational reality of children and young people, to which I have been most sensitive this year? What is the future and better reality of children and young people, to which I have dreamed of, in terms of improving their case? What did I feel God telling me in the sense of achieving quality education for all his children and young people, especially in Togo? Finally, what have I done personally, and with others in community, for a better education for children and young people, especially in Togo? All these questions have enabled me to evaluate my finishing academic year, and my spiritual and apostolic life, and to draw from this evaluation, my apostolic project for the academic year 2020-2021. Referring to the Gospel, Brother Jacques' sharing was structured around three concepts, namely: Abandonment, Faith and Trust, based on the verses «Go into deep water and lower your nets for a catch" and "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." Thus, the Lord Jesus invites us to cooperate with him in the quality educational work of all his children and young people that he entrusts to us every day, every year

despite our weaknesses and moods. He is the one who takes the initiative to "Go into deep water ". We must trust him and surrender ourselves to divine Providence in prayer and above all in mental prayer as recommended in the Style of Life in Chapter 6, No. 39: "The Signum Fidei love prayer and make it the first and main exercise of the day. They devote every day an important time for prayer." Meditation No.

196, for the time of the retreat allowed me to discover my personal responsibility and that of Jesus Christ in my daily mission. It

also showed me that spiritual and apostolic fruitfulness depends both on God and on oneself. At the end of the retreat, the animator invited me to give importance to the Signum Fidei prayer, the mental prayer and the prayer of the teacher before school. The virtual spiritual retreat, for a first experience, went well overall. For this, I thank our Lord Jesus Christ and Saint John the Baptist for associating me with the Lasallian Educational Mission in the formation of young people, especially the most underprivileged.

These days spent in intimacy with our Lord have allowed me to deepen my Lasallian vocation. I am very happy and satisfied with this spiritual nourishment. I would like to express my gratitude to the Community of Lomé, which offered me a peaceful setting for mediation and prayer. My thanks to Brother Visitor of the Gulf of Benin, Brother Paulin DEGBE who made this retreat possible, to Brother Jacques MONCHEBI the Animator, for his availability, his accompaniment, and to all those who helped me at the technical level for the success of this spiritual activity, especially Miss Nadège LAMBONI, the District Communication Officer.

Edith TOUVI

Signum Fidei Lomé – TOGO



TSHOLOFELO COMMUNITY (PHOKENG)

During this month we got a call from two young men from Siza informal Settlement in regards to helping the old man who lived in a small unsafe shack (pictures provided), we

To cut the story short, we then gave the feedback to the community so to come up with some solution to the request of this old man. Without any waste of time we all decided to build a new Shack for him and to give out some house furniture. Something that really



responded positive to their request. My self (Bro Moalusi) and Bro Paul decided to visit the old man so to see in which way we can render our help, on our arrival at that place we all couldn't believe what we saw. Poverty is real in South Africa, the sad part is that our government turns blind eyes to people who live in the informal settlement as they are not regarded as part of the Municipality, in other words there is no development budget for them.



made me emotional is when I saw young men working so hard in building the shack for free, they were all happy even singing. I then decided to interrupt them, trying to understand what really made them want to help out this old man especially, for free. One guy by the name of Thabo responded on behalf of them, "This old man is our neighbour, we regard him as one of us, so it is important to hand out our help to him as he cannot afford to pay for the builder. It is our responsibility that we work as a team so to make our community a loving, friendly and safe environment". This really brought joy to Tsholofelo Community as we always encourage people to help each other.

Br. Moalusi
South Africa

GOING BEYOND THE BORDERS BY “LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF”



In order to experience this beautiful word of Jesus, the centre called "HANITRA" welcomes "street children" or children whose parents are not able to enrol them in school or are not even able to take care of them. This educational centre is located in TOAMASINA, within the premises of the Stella Maris Catholic High School, one of the Brothers' schools in that city. In this centre, the children are taught literacy, politeness, embroidery... in short, they are educated. They attend the educational centre only in the afternoons because in



the morning they stay at home to support their parents who live from hand to mouth. There are five educators in this

centre and each one gives the best of himself to these children. The District of course, entrusts the supervision of these educators to the Brothers of the Community of Stella Maris. Concerning infrastructure, much remains to be done.

At each Highlight of the liturgical year, namely Advent and Lent, the pupils of Stella Maris organise a collect for charity for the children of the educational centre. So every Christmas and Easter Eve, we live an unforgettable experience with these children. We celebrate a Mass to testify the presence of God in their lives despite its difficulties and challenges. In addition, a time of social followed always this mass. During that social, they are given a meal and toys of which they are as proud as any other child of their age is. Their parents are also invited to all these celebrations. These fraternal sharing and gestures remind us of what Jesus tells us: "Amen, I tell you, whenever you have done it to one of these little ones of mine, you have done it to me". To come close to these abandoned children and to take care of them is, for us Brothers, the realisation of this beautiful word of Jesus. This word motivates us to go beyond borders and to give a little of what we have.

Live Jesus in our hearts! Forever!

Brother FANOMEZANTSOA Josoa, FSC
Stella Maris Tamatave Community

Little Explorers Pre-Primary



Little Explorers has been operating since 1998 and was started by Mrs Sally de Abreu. In its early years, Little Explorers



was known as Home from Home Pre-Primary but as the school grew and required formal registration, the school was renamed Little

Explorers Pre-Primary in 2005. Sally graduated from

the Johannesburg College of Education in 1991 and was fortunate to be appointed as a Grade 0 teacher at De La Salle Holy Cross College in 1992 where she taught for 4 years until 1996. She fell pregnant with triplets in 1996 and spent a year raising 3 boisterous little boys (who today are 24-year-old gentlemen educated at De La Salle Holy Cross College) and then decided to open a school from home where she could be with her children and follow her passion for teaching at the same time. The association with De La Salle Holy Cross left an indelible mark on Sally and the relationship she developed with the school and the parents of the children she taught whilst at De La Salle Holy Cross meant that from the very beginning, children from Home, inevitably followed their formal schooling at De La Salle Holy Cross. Sally subsequently was blessed with a little baby girl who today attends De La Salle Holy Cross in Grade 10. In 2017 and inspired by our Lord, Little Explorers

formally became affiliated to De La Salle Holy Cross College and this association has further entrenched the relationship Little Explorers has had with the College over the years. We are proud to be part of a Catholic Institution with such a rich history in developing children in a South African context. Our school has been a labour of love fuelled by a desire to make a difference to the lives of little children needing a loving, nurturing and spiritual environment. Over 900 children have entered through our doors over the years and we are inspired every time we receive a child of a parent who attended our school all those years ago. From fledgling little child to parent – the circle of life never ceases to amaze us as teachers. We are so proud to see children who we nurtured now being responsible members of society all over the world.



At the foundation of this amazing project is a God who has inspired us to teach His ways over the years. A child is one of the most visible miracles of our Lord and we often remark, as teachers, how privileged we

are to have been given the honour to be one of the first to be able to pass the message of our Lord to these little minds so eager to learn – thank you Lord for your rich blessings. We follow a rich and varied early learning programme and when the opportunity arises, we involve the school and the children in social projects as a way of showing them that we all have a responsibility to the wider community we live in and particularly to the less fortunate. Closer to home, we are constantly amazed at the generosity of our parents when there is a need within the school community and we as teachers sincerely appreciate the kindness of our parent body – thank you and may you all receive, in turn, the blessings that such generosity deserves. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived and shook the world and our community. Fear was widespread and Little Explorers was not spared of the turmoil that surrounded us all. With the incredible assistance of De La Salle Holy Cross College, we mobilised into an online format of learning which was a challenge for all but particularly for little children of 2 to 5 years of age who have such a short attention span. We were inspired by the resilience of these little ones during this trying period and recently welcomed the children back to school with little masks and face shields.

We look forward to continuing this project that started 22 years ago and to building on the relationship that we have had with De La Salle Holy Cross College over many years. Jesus said, “Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matthew 19:14

Mary Hyam, South Africa

COVID-19 SCHOOL OPENING EXPERIENCE AT MOUNT LA SALLE COLLEGE, NAKA

The Nigeria Government announced a lockdown that lasted over a month, in order to help control the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the untold sufferings that ensued among the common people (the population that live from hand to mouth) forced the Government to ease the lockdown. At this juncture, places of



worship, markets and inter-state vehicular movements, including other human interactive activities have been allowed. Nonetheless, restrictions in terms of social gatherings and international travel are still in force.

The corona virus has created a very difficult situation at Mount La Salle College, Naka, because for the past five months our school has been closed owing to the lockdown and restrictions. As a result, there was no school fees and no salaries for the educators who work in the ministry with us. When school was abruptly stopped because of the pandemic, foodstuff in the students' store was distributed as palliative to some selected support staff, and we wish it reached all our partners in the ministry, but it was not enough. This situation is the same in all private schools in the whole of Nigeria. Private school owners have not been able to pay their staff for at least five months now. The Brothers' community at Mount La Salle

College, Naka at this moment depends on the Sector office for their upkeep, since there have been no school fees coming from the school.

The only positive impact I can think of is that Naka is an agrarian town, therefore, many people who would ordinarily be held up with office work, such as teaching have taken to farming for survival. The school community too has taken advantage of the

lockdown to cultivate maize, beans and cassava on a plot of land that expands to 4 hectares.

Fortunately for us in Naka, there has been no report of Covid-19, of course, no one in the little town has been tested, so, we presume that we are all negative from the virus, even though the town has continued to interact with people from towns and cities that are affected by Covid-19. There has been only one case whereby one of our students lost his father, and it was reported that the father showed symptoms of Covid-19. In respect to the Covid-19 restriction policy in the country, our school was closed in March, that was during the 2nd semester. Subsequently, the 3rd



semester was due to start after Easter on the 7th April 2020, but it was not possible, because of the restrictions. Currently, schools have been allowed to reopen, only for students who are in the graduating

classes. This means that the 3rd semester is cancelled. It is likely that the cumulative results of 1st and 2nd semester would be used to promote students to the next class. In this regard, the Government has ordered that schools put in place Covid-19 preventive measures such as social distancing, regular hand washing, the wearing of face mask/shield, temperature check at the school gate, to mention but a few. On our part, at Mount La Salle, Naka we made a banner to give the returning students from the graduating classes a quick and basic information on the preventive measures of Covid-19. Furniture in the school have been adjusted in a manner that promotes social distancing. Officials from the local ministry of health came around for supervision of the school, to see that we are compliant with the Covid-19 preventive measures as schools opened on the 5th



Bro Biin Godwin, FSC

Nigeria

NEWS FROM THE NOVITIATE OUR LADY OF GRACES IN BOBO DIOULASSO



August, 2020. The real fear and uncertainty for us is that some of our students have returned from some cities and towns where Covid-19 is present. The testing capacity is poor; we cannot think of asking our students take a test of the virus before returning to school. This type of situation has made the Brothers, educators and the entire school community vulnerable. However, since we have no choice, the administrative team of the school has agreed to enforce the preventive measures that are



within our reach and leave the rest to God.

The 19 novice Brothers are all doing well. They made their start of 2nd year retreat from August 25th to September 1st. On Wednesday 2nd September, we celebrated this event in an atmosphere of prayer and conviviality. The two Egyptian postulants have arrived in Bobo last Monday. Their journey went very well. They are getting used to the rhythm of the community. With the high number of novices: 19 novices in the 2nd year and 24 novices expected in the 1st year, Brother Jacques, the Director of the novitiate (R 93.6) will be in charge of accompanying those in the 1st year in Bobo and Brother Jean Palmier will take care of those in the 2nd year in Nasso.

Brother Jacques MONCHÉBI

Director of the Novitiate