



# RELAF NEWSLETTER N°47

Brothers of the Christian Schools



RELAF Newsletter is a publication of the Brothers of the Christian Schools  
by the regional team.

B.P 1927-Abidjan 08 Côte d'Ivoire

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**OCTOBER 2023**

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## EDITORIAL

### AKWABA THE GENERAL COUNCIL IN RELAF

Inspired by the vision of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the General Council made a commitment and dedicated 2023 to visiting the five Regions. The schedules are as follows; Asia-Pacific Regional Conference (PARC) in January 2023, the Lasallian Region of Europe and the Mediterranean (RELEM) in February-March, the Lasallian Region of North America (RELAN) in June, the Lasallian Region of Latin America (RELAL) in September and conclude with the Lasallian Region of Africa (RELAF) from 13<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2023 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. This meeting will be followed by the visits of the members of the General Council community to certain countries from 5<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November 2023. All delegations will then travel to Abidjan 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

The purpose of these pastoral visits and the meeting is to understand how the Districts/Delegations and the Regions as a whole is functioning at all levels. The visits will enable the Councillors to learn about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with the life of the mission, and to examine with local leaders how the vision set by the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the AIMEL III and the Leavening Project is being implemented in the Region.

These historic visits are opportunities to continue the Lasallian conversations initiated by the General Council more than a year ago. It is also an opportunity to walk together in the Synodal Spirit and dialogue to strengthen collaboration. These visits and meetings should enable the members of the central government to identify the priorities of the Region in order to better accompany and serve the mission of the Institute.

To crown all the visit to RELAF, all the Visitors will be invited to Rome for an extended period for a kind of an "ad limina" visit from 7<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024. During this visit, the Visitors will have meetings with the General Council, the International Council of the Association for Mission (CIAMEL) and the International Economic Council (CEI). These activities are to enable the region to fulfil one of the requirements of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter: *"The structures of governance that generate co-responsibility, sustainability, transparency, and solidarity to creatively ensure the animation of the Lasallian educational mission throughout the world."* Cf. Cir. 478, November 2022.

After the Regional Mission Assembly held last April 2023, this forthcoming meeting between RELAF with the Superior General and his Council is the second most important event the Region is about to experience. The regional team is working hard to ensure that everything turns out well. I would like to take this opportunity to invite the Lasallians of the Districts/Delegations to warmly receive our guests from the Mother House and also pray for a successful meeting in Abidjan. We are equally called to pray that these meetings produce abundant fruit for the Lasallian educational mission in the Region. May God's will be done!

**Brother DIRETENADJI Anatole**  
General Councillor.

## THE BLACKFEET, THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF NORTH AMERICA.

My recent visit to the RELAN region in the United States gave me the opportunity to discover a completely different reality from that of American city dwellers living in the skyscrapers of San Francisco, Philadelphia, Chicago or Newark...

The Blackfeet, an indigenous people of North America, settled in the state of Montana, precisely in Browning, a city close to Canada where the same people live.



In this region, St John Baptist de La Salle reached out to this people through the presence of a community of Brothers of the Christian Schools and **De La Salle Blackfeet School**, a school for poor children. The story of the Blackfeet is very interesting and so similar to the stories of other indigenous peoples. So, I thought I'd share some footage with the readers of our newsletter. This first sequence is devoted to the presentation of the Blackfeet. You can look forward to the other sections in future issues. So don't miss a thing.

### Who are the Blackfeet?

The Blackfeet, a nomadic group of bison-hunting warrior Amerindians, once roamed the Great Plains of North America. Lacking agriculture, pottery, basketry and canoes, they depended almost entirely on the bison for their survival. Living in tipis (dwellings), the Blackfeet developed a rich lifestyle that enabled them to survive for hundreds of years. "According to historian John Gattuso, *"the Blackfeet, once known as the Cossacks of the plains, were one of the most powerful tribes in the American West"*.

### At the beginning

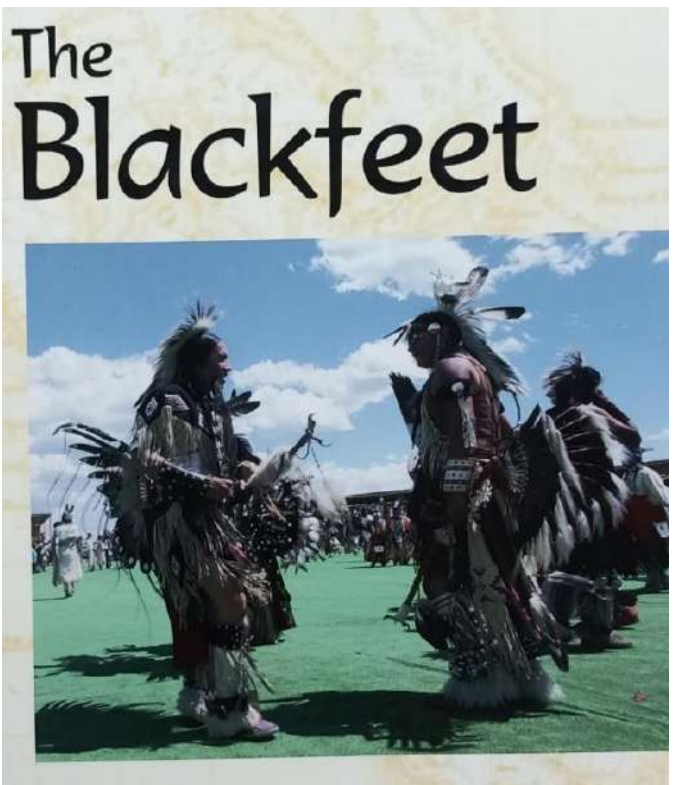
In the beginning, some ten to twenty-five thousand years ago, the ancestors of all the Amerindians came to America from Asia. These first men were hunters who reached the lands of North America by crossing a land bridge that, at the time, linked the two continents. This great migration lasted several centuries. These new inhabitants

lived in isolated groups or tribes, each developing its own language and way of life.

The ancestors of today's Blackfeet first settled in the great forests of northern Canada. Cornered by hostile neighbours, the Blackfeet then moved south to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. There, they settled in areas that are now part of the state of Montana and the Canadian province of Alberta.

### A chilling prediction

The Blackfeet, like many other Amerindian peoples, have long used myths and legends to explain their history and way of life. In Blackfeet stories, the central character is usually the OLD MAN, who is the equivalent of the great spirit of



God. This story, told by historian Dee Brown, tells of the creation of the Blackfeet, while offering a chilling prediction of their future.

OLD MAN came from the south. As he travelled, he created mountains, plains, forests and scrubland, placing rivers here and there, and arranging the world as we see it today. The OLD

MAN covered the plains with grass so that the animals could eat.

He took mud and shaped it into human forms. He blew on them and they became human beings. He created men and women and named them **Siksika** or Blackfeet.

One day, the OLD MAN told the Blackfeet that it was time for him to go. He said: "*I have marked out this land for you*". This is your land. Don't let anyone else come on this land, or you'll be in trouble. If other peoples come, take your bows and arrows and drive them away. If you let them come, you will lose everything.

For many moons, the people kept other people away, but soon fair-skinned, bearded men arrived, bearing gifts. They said they only wanted to stay a short time. The tribes accepted, but just as the OLD MAN had predicted, the tribe soon lost everything..... (to be continued).

## **RELAF ON THE MOVE!**

It's good to say that Africa is on the move, although this is rightly said for planet Earth, in these times when even the environment is changing. And indeed, if we scale things down and look at our Institute, we can see that there too the image takes on an air of truth if we apply it to Africa. In fact, the repeated calls for better and more effective vocational promotion are bearing abundant fruit in our French-speaking sub-region. Despite our obvious limitations and weaknesses, many young people are knocking at our doors to take part in our mission of bringing the Gospel to the world of education.

So it is that our Bobo Dioulasso Novitiate, aware of its vocation to be the source of this flowering of vocations to the Brotherhood of St John Baptist de La Salle, is in the process of completing the project to build a new Novitiate in the beautiful setting of Bolibana. The plan is bold and symbolic. The three blocks of accommodation, each with a capacity of 20 rooms, are arranged in a semi-circle around the chapel and common services, as if to signify that all life should be centred on Christ, symbolised by the place of his bodily presence, the progressive discovery of his person and the call he makes to us, through common services of study and fraternisation. In addition to the chapel, which is currently under construction, the remaining work will be the last residential block, landscaping and the courtyard, as well as the fencing to secure the novitiate.

But while the problem of intake capacity is being resolved at the Novitiate, the same problem has arisen at the Scholasticate: at Saint Miguel's, only three scholastics returned to their District at the end of their third and final year, compared to seventeen others arriving in their first year. As a result, the problem of capacity arose. The Brothers Visitors discussed this at the end of August in an online conference. They got to the heart of the matter. Two important decisions had to be made: to enlarge the chapel, which was already too small for the daily services - especially the Eucharist - as many people (especially CELAF students) came to take part from the square outside.

Given the urgency of the situation, a solution had to be found to accommodate all the new scholastics. After several explorations, the best solution was finally found: to convert some unused premises into new rooms, and to add an extension to the chapel. Obviously, the solution found came at a cost that was far from being covered by the resources of the regional community alone. As for the Brothers of Saint Gabriel, they were sent to the regional community, especially as their number increased from 3 to 5 (including the formator). Therefore, this is how the regional house came to exercise its role of welcome in the Region. And we were happy to broaden our horizons by welcoming new members, so our community became an inter-congregational community.

In addition to the three permanent members: Brother Valère, Director of the CELAF INSTITUT, Brother Urbain, Regional Secretary and Brother Joan, who is in charge of the bursar's office and Director of the community, our community will also be large. Brother Kesiki from Lwanga District of Africa has just joined the regional community. He will take on the responsibilities that Brother Ferdinand of the Delegation of Rwanda had assumed. The community will then have the double challenge of fraternity lived in *intercongregationality* and in internationality, Brothers coming from five countries: Togo, Madagascar, Spain, Senegal, and Nigeria.

It only remains for us to express our gratitude to the Lord who fills us with joy through the fraternity of our Brothers and their religious spirit, and to hope that he will fill us with his Spirit who knows how to speak all languages so well, including that of the heart.

**Fraternally**

**Brother Joan Sala COLL**

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**FIRST CHAPTER OF THE DILAO: GOD'S WORK AT WORK.**

A dream come true. Now legally the Lasallian District of West Africa (DILAO), this young District has made its journey from newborn to this first chapter where it has received the elements necessary for its growth as a divine work.



In an atmosphere of fraternity and conviviality, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of DILAO took place from 02 to 06 August 2023 in Toussiana. Before entering into the dynamics

of the Chapter, the retreat from 24<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023, led by Brother Jacques d'Huiteau with the evocative theme "the prophetism of the Lasallian charism in the light of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter", allowed

the capitulants and some senior Brothers who were not capitulants to recharge their batteries at the true source, Jesus himself.

The Chapter began on the morning of 02 August with a recollection led by Mgr. Lucas SANON, Bishop of the Diocese of Banfora. The theme of this recollection was that of this historic Chapter: *"Lasallians, united to Christ, leaven for a more fraternal world in West Africa"*.

In addition, the Chapter Preparatory Committee organised a beautiful opening ceremony for the Chapter, rich in colour and symbolism. This meticulously prepared ceremony consisted of a procession with two groups of capitulants, representing the former DAO and DGB Districts. To the rhythm of the song *"Seigneur nous arrivons des quatre coins de l'horizon"* ("Lord, we come from the four corners of the horizon"), in keeping with the tenor of the ceremony, the groups met at the foot of the statue dedicated to Saint John Baptist de La Salle, for a symbolic and realistic fusion.

In addition, the reports of the Brother Visitors (former DAO and DGB) were presented and adopted. Thus, the new Visitor, Brother Rodrigue TOEPPEN, presented his vision of the new District in three major challenges: the challenge of fraternity, the challenge of vocations ministry and that of mission in the light of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. Commissions were created for this purpose, in particular the Community Commission; the Commission for Lasallian Vocation Ministry, Accompaniment and Formation; the Commission for Administrative, Economic and Financial

Management and Self-Care; the Commission for Revision and Amendment of the DILAO Statutes and the Commission for Association for the Lasallian Educational Mission. These five commissions were set up to make proposals, drawing inspiration from the Acts of the 46<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the vision of the Brother Visitor, community and individual notes, and so on.

In his closing remarks, the Brother General Councillor reminded the Brothers and Lasallians of the threefold proximity required to build a more fraternal world: *"You must be close to your brothers, close to Lasallians, close above all to those who need it most ... You must teach other Lasallians, by your witness as good servants, to live fraternal service, in fraternal communion so that the tangible sign of the Reign of God is visible in our fraternal and educational communities"*.

May these words of encouragement help us to form a District that is large, united, strong and prosperous for the spread of the Lasallian educational mission. The Chapter closed on a note of satisfaction for all, because it was lived in an atmosphere of fraternal communion, joy and simplicity. May our prayers accompany the Brother Visitor and his Council in the mission entrusted to them.

The work of God is at work. Always seeking to answer the question "Where is my Brother?" is the first step on the road to conversion and authentic fraternal life. May Saint John Baptist de La Salle help us and may Jesus live in our hearts!

**Lomé, 29<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Brother Élisée P. LARE, DILAO.**

## ORIGIN OF CHARLES LWANGA DISTRICT OF AFRICA

In his 1993 report, the then Superior General, Brother John Johnson, expressed his satisfaction with the evolution of administration at District level and supported the amalgamation of certain sub-Districts and delegations to form larger Districts. He said: "We are very pleased with this development. We are convinced that it would be advantageous to reduce the extraordinarily high number of government units in the Institute. We support the idea of grouping a number of Districts, Sub-Districts and Delegations into larger, even international, Districts. The structures of these new Districts should allow for relative national autonomy".<sup>1</sup>

This report was a great opportunity and an invitation for the De La Salle Brothers present and working in various English-speaking African nations. Although it was the same Institute, the administration and direction depended largely on the missionary Brothers working in the different African countries: Nigeria depended on the Canadian, British and Irish Brothers. Kenya depended on the Brothers from the United States. Eritrea was under the supervision of the Italian Brothers; Ethiopia was blessed by the Brothers of the United States and Eritrea; while South Africa was under the sole supervision of the Irish Brothers.

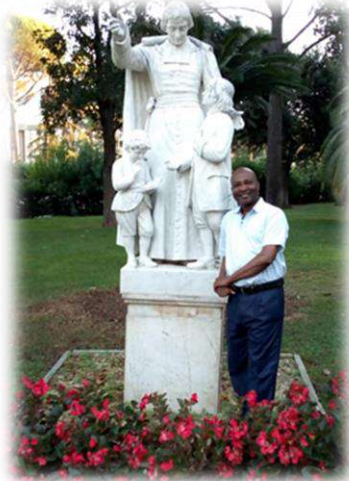
Following the Superior General's report in 1993, the Brothers from the five countries (Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia and Eritrea) held series of meetings to see how these countries could come together to form a single District. Prior to this report, however, there was a common formation programme. The Brothers of the five countries have had a common novitiate since 1989 and a scholasticate, both located in Nairobi, Kenya.

The first District Chapter (as yet unnamed) was held in 1997, with participants from the five countries, the Centre of the Institute and the countries that had sent Brothers as missionaries. The Chapter lasted for a week.

during which the Acts and Resolutions of the new District were drafted.

### The name of the "Lwanga" District

The last day of the chapter was devoted to giving an appropriate name to the Institute's new District. Several names such as Limpopo, Kilimanjaro, Tanganyika, and English-speaking District of Africa were suggested. Finally, a shy and reserved young Brother, who had barely spoken during the whole chapter, whispered a name to an older Brother, who then publicly announced the name of Saint Charles Lwanga. As if everyone had been waiting, Charles Lwanga was unanimously applauded by all present. This shy and reserved young Brother was none other than yours truly.



Brother Ehrmantraunt Dominic, from the United States, who had worked in Kenya for many years, was appointed first Visitor, with Brother James Wallace as Auxiliary Visitor. Brother Esayas Tzegay, from Eritrea, was the second Brother Visitor,

with Brother Gabriel Griffin as Auxiliary Visitor. Brother Ghebreyesus Habte, from Eritrea, took over as third Brother Visitor, with Brother Betre Fiseha as auxiliary. The fourth and current Brother Visitor is Brother Betre Fisseha, from Ethiopia, and his auxiliary is Brother Moses Abunya, from Nigeria.

Today, the Lwanga District comprises of seven countries: Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, Nigeria and Southern Sudan.

**Brother Wole OLABANJO, Director of De La Salle International Scholasticate, Nairobi, Kenya**

<sup>1</sup> John Johnson, Report of the Superior General: 42 Chapter, Brothers of the Christian Schools (Via Aurelia, Rome, 1993), 76.



## **CENTRAL AFRICA DISTRICT VOCATIONAL CAMP, 2023 EDITION themed: What are you looking for?**

The District of Central Africa has a tradition of organising vocational camps for young boys who aspire to the religious life of the Brother of the Christian Schools around the Cameroons, Chad and Equatorial Guinea axis. The 2023 edition was organised in Cameroon from 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at Talba in the Notre Dame de Lourdes community. Talba is located in the Department of Mbam and Kim, in the District of Mbangassina, in the Centre Region.

This camp was run by three young Brothers under the guidance of the Brother Visitor. Thirteen young people from Douala, Talba, Lomié, Ndjamena and Kélo took part. The first day was devoted to welcoming them and getting them settled in. They were able to discover the realities of life on the outskirts, with silence and lighting from battery-operated lamps powered by solar panels.

Three topics were developed by the camp leaders during the camp. Firstly, the theme of the vocational camp: *"What are you looking for?"* was developed for the benefit of the young people. Next, a brief history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was given, with emphasis on the specificity of the Lasallian vocation with a panorama of the District of Central Africa: its history, communities and works. Finally, a presentation on community life was given based on their experiences during the camp.

They were shown some formative videos: a documentary on Saint John Baptist de La Salle; *Queen of Katwe* and *Boychoir*. Through the documentary on Saint John Baptist de La Salle, it was noted that the young people acquired a good

knowledge of the history of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and the Founder. These films were intended to instil in them virtues such as fortitude, humility, patience and restraint, among others.



To conclude, the young people gave testimonies of their experiences in the vocational camp. They experienced praying together, accepting one another, working as a team and appreciating themselves as persons. They all marvelled at what they had, because they realised that in urban areas, they had the opportunity to go to school while others did not and they did, they had to go several kilometers before accessing school or quality education. They discovered that the Brothers' mission in the District of Central Africa covered several areas: education, health, agricultural and pastoral projects.

May the Lord consolidate the steps of these young people in search of Christ in the footsteps of Saint John Baptist de La Salle.

Brother Delence NGUELE, District of Central Africa.

## DISCERNMENT RETREAT FOR ASPIRANTS, MADAGASCAR DISTRICT.

The Postulants' retreat took place from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September 2023. It was an opportunity that enabled the postulants to reflect on and continue to discern their vocations. It was a step forward in their vocational search. The retreat programme was designed to help young people reflect before making the decision to pursue discernment.

For this retreat, twelve of them took part in the discernment exercise. Most of them are in their final year of secondary school, and will sit their Baccalauréat in 2024; some have already had their Baccalauréat, and can join the house of formation from October if they so wish and if they so request.

The Retreat ended joyfully with a festive celebration with the Brothers of the Provincial and the Postulancy communities and in the presence of the future scholastics and future novice postulants.

**Brother Bruno RAKOTOMAVO,**  
**Vocation ministry of the Brothers -**  
**Madagascar District**



## A LETTER TO THE FORMATORS OF THE DE LA SALLE BROTHERS



*Dear formators,*

*I am a student Brother at De La Salle International Scholasticate in Nairobi, Kenya. I am writing to express my gratitude for all the sacrifices made by the formators and to share with my fellow scholastics the issues that concern me.*

*It is often said that a young man declares war on the devil the day he answers the call to join a religious congregation, whether priesthood or brotherhood. This is true, because every religious man or woman is trained to help souls find their salvation (including their own). This is not good news for the kingdom of darkness. This makes the vocation of formators more difficult, because through discernment, formators help those being formed to discern and differentiate between the will of God and the will of the devil. The devil feels threatened by the efforts of the formators to be a good example for those being formed.*

*The world today has many pastors but few witnesses. The devil's new strategy is to allow brothers in formation to become perpetually professed brothers, but without*

conviction or personal commitment; religious who are materialistic, autocratic, deceitful and in competition with seculars in the things of the flesh, etc. Hence the need for formators to be models. Cardinal Sarah affirms that "the religious person is above all the work of the formators who formed him or her". The vocation of formators is more demanding, knowing full well that, as Father Patrick Ogbonna ISCH (current chaplain of the La Salle Scholasticate in Nairobi) says, "he (Jesus) who left the 99 sheep to seek the one that was lost will not spare you to scatter the 99". I invite you, dear scholastics, to pray every day for all the formators for the good work they do in forming us.

#### APPRECIATE THE GENEROSITY OF A FORMATOR

Despite the challenges and expectations that come with being a formator, many Brothers are doing their best to demonstrate what it means to be true disciples of Saint John Baptist de La Salle. Your exemplary lives are an inspiration and a challenge to many of us. Dear scholastics, let us be grateful and continue to pray for our formators. For what they are, we will probably be. As an African proverb says, "the seed cannot fall far from the tree that produces it". Dear Formators, I offer you my sincerest apologies for the wrongs you have suffered in mentoring us. Most of the time, we don't see what you see. I pray that you will have the grace to continue to be good examples for us. May God strengthen you and help you to find fulfilment in this delicate vocation.

Dear Scholastic Brothers, we are called to be "gentlemen, scholars and saints". Always recognise, accept and improve your weaknesses in relation to your intelligence, your wisdom and your discipline. In truth, your strength can bring you success, but admitting your weaknesses and ineptitude, admitting that your vocation is a "grace" from God, can bring you fidelity to God and to your vocation. Be aware of your weaknesses and avoid defending them. Follow God's plan for you, meet him and find fulfilment in deepening your knowledge of God, the Church and the Institute. The God who has called you will not abandon you if you walk closely with him. He said it himself: "You did not choose me, but I chose you..." (Jn 15:16).

Brother Aye James Fanen

De La Salle Scholasticate-Nairobi Kenya

## BIRTHDAYS CHANGE THE WORLD

On his 86th birthday, Pope Francis paid tribute to three charitable people, including a homeless man who gives part of the alms he receives to other rough sleepers. The man's award, commonly known as the Mother Teresa Award, pays tribute to Saint Teresa of Calcutta, a dedicated Indian nun who founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity. Can you imagine a homeless person giving alms to other homeless people? It may be beyond our comprehension to think how much we sometimes neglect our neighbours in difficulty. If a homeless person can think of reaching out, what about you and me? It's food for thought, isn't it?

Today, people are using birthdays to change the world. It was in this same spirit of generosity that we went to St. La Salle - Karemeno school and found a Year 12 pupil by the name of **Benedict Kabatha**. On his 18th birthday, Benedict decided to give up his birthday presents and buy some food for a fellow pupil in Year 10 who is currently living with his grandmother, as well as helping to pay the 2<sup>nd</sup> school fees he owes every six months. And it looks like Benedict isn't stopping there - he's decided that from his 18th birthday he'll be doing charity work on his birthday!

It is an incredible call, given the challenges facing young people today, whose attention is drawn by so many challenges, including peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, social media and various uncertainties.

Benedict challenges us all today to leave our comfort zones and reach out into the horizons of

discomfort and instability to make someone else smile. Benedict may have no idea how many hearts he touched with this simple act of kindness, but believe me, the blessings this grandmother passed on to him will not be in vain.

La Salle Karemeno is fortunate to have such students who are the guardians of their brothers, the elder brothers of their peers and who can think beyond the classroom work and reach out to their peers to get to know them better. Stephen Mwaura, all the Brothers, teaching and non-teaching staff who work hard and touch hearts in their various departments to move forward in the spirit of our Founder, **Mtakatifu De La Salle**.

Want to help someone but don't know how? I've got a solution: go and see the neighbour next door. Today we're so connected on social media,

with thousands of followers on Instagram and Tiktok, thousands of friends on Facebook, thousands of subscribers and viewers on YouTube - but the name of your next-door neighbour? Whether he feeds himself or starves to death? That's the world we live in today. Today, be Ben, make someone



smile, change someone's life because the conscience of the servant is the conscience of God.

**Brother Aaron Ontita**  
**St. La Salle School Karemeno – Kenya,**  
**Lwanga District**

## LA SALLE COLLEGE ONDO CELEBRATES ITS 15TH GRADUATION CEREMONY

On Saturday 22 August 2023, La Salle College Ondo graduated 26 students after their 6-year academic and moral formation. Parents, Brothers, Lasallians, friends and other students and staff were in jubilation. Speaking at the occasion, the President of the PTA, Mr Isaac Oketa, recalled that six years ago, when he took his child to school, a liter fuel cost 120 naira and that at the time of graduation, the same liter of fuel cost 610 naira. He said this to demonstrate to the young graduates the reality of life outside school. He urged them to live up to all that they had learned from the human and Christian education provided at La Salle College in Ondo, Nigeria. Excited graduands lifted the principle.

The day kicked off with the Holy Mass, followed by the graduation ceremony.

It was truly a day of joy



### SUMMER SKILLS CAMP AT SALLE COLLEGE ONDO, AUGUST 2022

When Saint John Baptist de La Salle met Andrey Niel, it was to support the institutions Andrey Niel was establishing without any precise plan. What De La Salle thought was a momentary assistance to Niel gradually turned into a complete occupation that has continued for over three centuries now.

La Salle College Ondo, like other Lasallian institutions around the world, is committed to meeting the educational needs of the Ondo region. The aim of this year's summer camp was to teach children basic marketing skills. We are moving from a time when education was about being able to read and write to a time when education is about being able to sell and buy fairly.



Within the space of five weeks, the children were introduced to catering, sculpturing and writing in natural and relaxing way that is far removed from the traditional school methods. To boost their confidence, the children took skating lessons and, after several falls, many of them were able to skate effectively. This gave the additional skill.

La Salle College remains committed to sustainable education both inside and outside the classroom.

**Brother Simon KESIKI,  
Lwanga District**

## WHO IS ROBERT MWAI MBUGUA?



*Hello! My name is Robert Mwai Mbugua, a young man studying chemistry and biology at CTIE, the school of education at Tangaza University College. My journey has been a bit difficult, but I thank God for allowing me to get to where I am today.*

*My parents had financial difficulties and lived on the streets of Eldoret (165 miles north-west of Nairobi). So I grew up homeless and on the streets, with just my father. Fortunately, a Good Samaritan by the name of Sister Consolata saw my potential and enabled me to go to primary school in Nairobi. I enjoyed school, worked well and felt safe in the children's home where I lived.*

*In 2007, there was post-election violence and, in a way, my relationship with my tutor, Sr. Consolata, was interrupted. After completing my eighth year, I returned to the streets of Eldoret where I made a living from whatever casual employment I could find. Somehow, after two years, Sr. Consolata found me again and arranged for me to go to boarding school. I did so well that I got a B in the national exam, which gave me access to university education - but I couldn't afford to go.*

*At the time, I managed to live in the simplest of rooms, which cost 3 dollars a month. Yes, 3 dollars a month! Having been accepted into one of the public universities, Sr. Consolata paid my tuition fees for the first semester. I was very happy, even though I walked four hours a day to and from the university. Unfortunately, neither my tutor nor I could pay any more than that. I left university thinking that maybe university education wasn't for me. Back in Eldoret, I managed to get by, working at various jobs such as unloading lorries, supervising a pool hall and keeping order in a video game shop. I earned around four dollars a day, which enabled me to afford a modest house. I aspired to better things, but I was happy to be off the streets.*

*Apparently Sister Consolata wasn't finished with me yet! She put me in touch with the CTIE in the early days of 2020 and my life changed instantly. Thanks to a collaboration with Misan Cara, the CTIE team granted me a full scholarship and enabled me to buy basic necessities. I have never experienced such generosity and love in my life.*

*I'm continuing my studies until I graduate in October 2023. I'll be a great teacher and do what our institute's motto says: "Touching hearts, teaching minds and transforming lives" - just as mine has been transformed.*

*To all those who are helping to make it possible for students like me to become teachers, may God continue to bless you. I am humbly grateful.*

**Robert Mwai Mbugua, student at CTIE (Christ the Teacher Institute for Education), Lwanga District**

**FOR YOUR TEXTS TO BE PUBLISHED:**

- The text must not exceed 600 words
- The text must be dated and signed by the author
- Send a maximum of two well-chosen photos, maximum 500kb resolution.
- Respect the deadline set by the secretary.

**GENERAL COUNCILLOR'S CALENDAR**

- **5 to 18 October:** Plenary session continued.
- **19-21 October:** Community excursion
- **23-31 October:** Abidjan
- **1-4 November:** Abidjan
- **5-11 November:** Burkina Faso
- **12-22 November:** Abidjan, RELAF and General Council
- **25 November:** Rome, Assembly of the **AMSG** (Association des Africans and Malagasy at the service of the Generalices.
- **27-30 November:** Nairobi, Lwanga District of Africa chapter.
- **1-2 December:** Nairobi, continued chapter
- **3-4 December:** Rome
- **5-31 December:** Chad

Live Jesus in  
our hearts,  
forever!