

HOLY CROSS TODAY - GHANA

COMMUNICATING THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE MEN AND WOMEN
OF HOLY CROSS IN THE DISTRICT OF WEST AFRICA

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CELEBRATION OF RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

On Saturday April 2, the four novices in our District of West Africa were formally received as religious members in our Holy Cross Family with their profession of religious vows in Blessed Andre Chapel at the District Center in Brafu Yaw. Having now completed their pre-novitiate and novitiate programs, **Brothers Stephen Aidoo, Stephen Arthur, Raymond Frimpong and David Kpobi** were present with families, relatives and friends, as well as the Holy Cross community to celebrate the solemn occasion.

With the Church at large we experienced a certain sadness relating to the approaching death of the Holy Father as we celebrated this occasion. However, **Bro. Michael Amakyi**, District Superior, in his opening remarks of welcome supported the propriety of this occasion—these four young Brothers in Holy Cross begin a new ministry of dedicated service to the Lord, concurrent with the present circumstance of Pope John Paul II, who exemplified a dedicated life *par excellence* as Shepherd of God's People in the Universal Church. Indeed the pope's death did become a reality later in the evening of this day—a providential sign to these then newly professed serving to reinforce their own fidelity in their commitment to God through the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience "according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross".

The profession ceremonies began at 10 AM with an overflowing crowd extending to the wide semicircular porch outside the chapel. Families, relatives and friends of some of the novices had traveled great distances over not always ideal



Brothers Stephen Arthur, Stephen Aidoo, Raymond Frimpong, David Kpobi

road conditions for the occasion, one busload from Upper Volta having used all of Friday to arrive late in the night at the Center.

Fr. Bob Gilmour, CSC was the main celebrant, some half-dozen other priests (diocesan and religious) concelebrating with him. The Brafu Yaw parish choir did the honors for the occasion, refined in their renditions owing to the generosity of an Associate of Holy Cross member, **Mr. Peter Garga**, who had come some days earlier to work with the choir. They gave a highly commendable performance both vocal and instrumental (African rhythm and organ).

A truly beautiful 12-page booklet programming the unfolding liturgy for the occasion also had been prepared by Fr. Bob Gilmour. It was embellished with familiar African designs and native Twi 'Adinkra' religious symbols, impressive enough to give one a certain reluctance to discard it, which is the usual case once such ceremonies are concluded.

The *Rite of Profession* began after the homily given by Fr. Bob Gilmour. **Bro. Daniel Dardoe** called the four novices to come forward. **Bro. Michael Amakyi** then proceeded with the *Examination of Intent* of the novices to commit themselves to Christ through religious vows prefacing the actual individual profession of *Vows of poverty, chastity and obedience according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross* by each novice. Each newly professed then was given a special blessed *Cord*, symbolic and reminder of the vowed commitment to Christ that had been made. The newly professed then knelt before the altar facing the congregation as the religious in the Holy Cross Family there present stood with right hands raised, praying together for God's blessings on these four new members of our



family. To conclude the ceremony of profession all members of Holy Cross, family, relatives and friends of the newly professed came forward to individually congratulate and share with them in their joy and gratitude to God—impromptu dancing could be noted among many coming forward and returning from this encounter.

For the Communion reflection 20 members of a much larger St. Augustine's College choir had been invited for the occasion. They did a most commendable choral presentation of "They that Wait upon the Lord..." Even more noteworthy was the superb performance of the soloist, student **Eugene Osea**, whose cultured voice suggested the probability of voice training. "Not so", Eugene told this writer when later asked. (He was encouraged to consider this option).

Sr. Margaret Mary Nimo, CSC was the MC, who kept everything moving smoothly, and also gave timely explanations about certain parts of the ceremony for those not familiar with them. After the 2 ½ hour liturgical celebration all moved to the lawn outside the Blessed Brother Andre Chapel. Colorful canopies and a variety of trees provided shade as all further shared in

the joy of the occasion with refreshments and a meal. Departures began in mid-afternoon and volunteer workers began cleaning up the debris left by the huge crowd, which surely numbered some 400 persons. All had left by 4:30 PM as the young religious and candidates in Holy Cross, excepting the newly professed, had taken down the canopies and replaced chairs to respective locations.

The four newly professed brothers accompanied their respective families on the return to their homes to spend a few weeks vacation with them before returning to begin their new

ministries in Holy Cross.

Our thanks to all who contributed of their respective gifts and generosity in decorations, setting up accommodations, choral presentations, food provisions, and so on, upon whom the occasion depended to make it a truly grand and glorious celebration.

"Our vocation is a response to God's love...Our desire for love draws us to a union with the One who is life itself. We are called to turn inwardly to God, trusting that He will fulfill our deepest desire, the desire He Himself placed within us"

— Fr. Hugh Cleary CSC, Superior General

SECOND ANNUAL EASTER MONDAY GATHERING OF HOLY CROSS IN GHANA

A precedent had been set. The gathering last year on Easter Monday in Ghana at the Sisters of the Holy Cross house in Kasoa came off so well in the celebration/sharing as members of our Holy Cross ‘family’, that all enthusiastically responded to the invitation extended once again by **Sr. Margaret Mary Nimo, CSC**. From the Sisters’ other house in Takoradi, and from Sekondi and Cape Coast our own District members appreciated the fact of a much improved road to that of last year between Kasoa and our respective locations—the now completed highway over the last 50 km surely did enhance the pleasure of our journey. Last year the new highway construction was in its beginning stages from Winneba to Kasoa. The unpaved roads with ‘diversions’ (detours) required, perhaps, twice the travel time and with stages of discomfort than for the last occasion. The highway is now completed from some 5 miles before Winneba junction to Kasoa as a wide two-lane road, and is planned to be an ‘expressway’ of two lanes each direction from Kasoa to Accra.

Advantage was taken of the brief time allotted in awaiting the arrival of one of the cars from Sekondi to repair a dysfunctional retracting antenna on **Sr. Jane Chantal’s** car. It had just been in a repair shop a few days earlier, and it appeared that some worker may have tried to remove the whole unit mounted inside the trunk area, only succeeding in making the antenna inoperative. As is not uncommon if one forgets to check such things before leaving the ‘fitters’ shop, he may find later a tool kit greatly depleted of tools, as had happened in this instance. But fortunately the District van had necessary tools to enable the repair on the antenna to be completed just as the late-arrivals came in the gate.. With the vocational instructors from

Skills Training Center, along with **Brothers Vincent Gross** and **Tom Dillman**, who also have some expertise in maintenance areas, it truly would have been embarrassing before our Holy Cross Sisters to have come up losers in the project! Sr. Jane’s expressed gratitude and delight at our success sufficed as return for labor expended.

This *fait accompli* was a good omen as things unfolded for the remainder of the day. We began



with the Eucharistic celebration outdoors under the shade of one large tree and spacious canopy, the latter having broad stripes of ND Blue & Gold—the Sisters own equipment, of course. **Fr. Bob Gilmour**, celebrant, reflected in his homily the joy we all experienced on this Easter Monday coming together as Holy Cross family celebrating on this second day of Easter the resurrection of the Lord, with gratitude to God for his goodness to us in all things.

With the ending of Mass and liturgical accessories removed, things were quickly transformed as the setting for our social, which was followed by a splendid dinner, rather banquet, albeit smorgasbord format. The banquet table’s most striking feature was a huge baked grouper (say 25 lb fish) surrounded by various other foodstuffs. **Sr. Helene Sharp** and **Sr.**

“**Maggie**” **Nimo**, assisted by their two candidates did the honors on the food preparations, **Sr. Jane Chantal** bringing along her usual excellent desserts from Takoradi.

In mid-afternoon, it seemed time for all to take leave. However, most all of us were anxious to see how the new Center, Nyame Adom, several minutes journey down the road from Ksoa, so we stopped off there to see how things were shaping up. The basic structure is completed, but much interior finishing needs to be done, the masons farther along and seemingly more skilled in their work than the carpenters, but unfair to judge the latter who had a lot of touch up work remaining. It will be some months at least before the project is completed, this compounded by the fact of some serious palaver with the contractor, according to **Sr. Helene**, ‘project supervisor’ as to the expenditure of monies for

building and labor thus far completed. But from all appearances it will be a very fine structure once all is finished.

One further stop was made by District members another 5-minutes journey down the road to look at a piece of land available for purchase as offered to **Bro. Michael**, which did seem to be rather ideal for the tentative location of a planned Holy Cross Teachers’ Training College. This will be presented in more detail in a later issue presuming the project becomes a viable undertaking. Presently all seems to favor plans for the college except for the fact of available funding.

With the final legs of our respective journeys resumed, we carried with us the pleasant memories of a most rewarding day of celebration of our identity and fellowship in our Holy Cross Family.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR ICF

Beginning with the April-June program, **Brother Robert (Bob) Aron** has been appointed as the new director of the Institute for Continuing Formation. He replaces **Sister Donna Webber, SSpS**, who had been its director over the past 8 years. Bro. Robert is Australian born and a member of the Christian Brothers for the past 35 years. He comes to ICF with a long history of involvement in formation work in Africa, and has a B.A. and Masters in Pastoral Counseling from Loyola College in Maryland.



As his first ministry in his congregation, Bob taught for some 20 years in senior secondary schools in Australia. Feeling called to serve in

the Christian Brothers’ African missions, he arrived in Tanzania for his new ministry as Director of Formation and Vocations for eight years, which was followed by two more years replacing the Mercy Sisters in the Makura slum area of Nairobi, Kenya. There he served as Manager of the school and clinic. It was then that his Superior General asked Bob to become the Director of a new novitiate project of the Christian Brothers in Tamale, Ghana. From December, 2000 he helped establish the novitiate program over the next three years, after which he shared time of a sabbatical year in the Australia and the US, the latter the origin of his father--some family members still there. He became known to Holy Cross in this time also, living for several days at Columba Hall, ND.

During 2004 Bob was approached about the directorship of ICF. After much consultation with the Congregational Leadership Team in Rome, Bob was appointed by the Board. He was given several months to learn through the experience of Sr. Donna before taking over as the Director in March, 2005. Bob hopes to expand the types of programs on offer at ICF and have more men given the sabbatical time to benefit from the ICF experience.

We in the District take this opportunity to express appreciation to **Sister Donna Webber, SSps** in behalf of all religious communities, whose members have benefited in the ICF

program during her tenure of eight years. We pray that God may bless her as she resumes her ministry within her own religious community.

BANGLADESH PROVINCE LENDS HELPING HAND AGAIN

An enthusiastic welcome was given by members present at our May District meeting to **Bro. Joachim (Joa) Ratan Gomes, CSC** of the Bangladesh Province, who had arrived April 21 in Ghana. He was delayed in getting his visa, which thwarted plans to be here earlier to replace **Bro. Linus D’Rozario**, who left in mid-December. He has been a member in the Bangladesh Province for 23 years.

Joa, as did Linus, teaches in the Electrical Shop at the Holy Cross (Skills) Vocational Training Center in Takoradi. He received his initial technical education at St. Joseph’s School of Industrial Trades, after which he taught there until 1990 in Electricals, Air-conditioning and Refrigeration, except for a year’s leave in 1987 to further upgrade his skills in Electrical Trades at the Vocation Teachers Institute in Bogra. He then became the Director and Hostel Supervisor at Miriam Ashrom School in Chittagong from 1991-2004. While awaiting visa approval he taught for 6 months at Botomoly Home and Trade School in Dhaka until March, 2005.

Bro. Joa has expressed his joy in having the opportunity to contribute to the work of Holy Cross in Ghana in his present function, and in his work thus far with the students in the Skills program. Having lived much of his life inland

and where vegetation is somewhat sparse, he finds the ocean a mile or so away very impressive, as well as the lush vegetation surrounding the school “most beautiful”. He



also has an awareness of the rather ‘solid’ Christian environment in this area of Ghana, and attracted to the relatively poor and simply people with whom he has thus far come in contact.

Bro. Joa resides in Moreau House with several other Brothers of the Skills staff in an annex to the pre-novitiate. His evident *joie de vivre*, “bubbling over” personality is much appreciated by all, especially in his influence on our four young pre-novices. It has already been said, but once again, “Joa, Akwaba!”

HAPPY SABBATICAL, SR. JANE!



On Saturday, May 21st, the Sisters of the Holy Cross and members of our District gathered together for a somewhat surprising (insofar as a *fait accompli* as there surely are not just a few garrulous religious among us), but truly a **SURPRISE** Party for **Sr. Jane Chantal, CSC**, who left Ghana on June 2nd for a much deserved Sabbatical Year after some 26 years here in Ghana. The surprise still safe even with the arrival for the occasion on the rooftop at the District Center—District members had gathered, respectively, for forthcoming Chapter committee meetings, and the Sisters for their own business meeting at the Center that is halfway between their houses in Kasoa and Takoradi.

Sr. Jane arrived in Ghana in 1989 to contribute of her many years experience in both nursing and administration in her community's hospitals, especially in her ministry in the psychiatric area. Despite all the experience she nonetheless was required to spend a year of orientation with assignments in various hospitals here in Ghana especially having facilities treating mentally ill persons. This really was wise, as one surely must have an understanding of the individual's cultural background before attempting to assist them in their existentially setting.

She then, with the assistance of the Bishop Sam of the Takoradi diocese, undertook the project to establish The Damien Center for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill. This facility also houses a regular medical clinic. She continued in this ministry until resigning at the

end of year 2000. Shortly later Sister Jane was elected as the Area Coordinator for the Sisters of the Holy Cross foundations in Uganda and Ghana. She continued in this role, as well as working closely in the formation program beginning to show promise with the increase of numbers of candidates to their community in Ghana.

As we bid her farewell, we are happy that she now will have time to refurbish her psychic and physical energies, benefiting especially from the planned year of studies in Berkley's theology program. And she has assured us that after the year of 'rest and relaxation' she plans to return to Ghana with renewed 'vim and vigor'. Jane, we will miss your ready smile and cheerful presence—Happy Sabbatical! “Nyame nhyira wo!”

GHANA SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON STRIKE

Students in Secondary Schools in Ghana, who returned in early April to begin their third trimester of studies, met classrooms devoid of teachers, who had gone on strike nationwide to appeal for just adjustments in compensation paid for some areas of service related to teaching.

While the global exchange rate for the Cedi (Ghana's currency) has remained rather stable over the past year and more, the recent increase in petroleum products have caused significant increases in transportation costs, resulting in higher prices of consumer goods.

Teachers at all levels in government schools

did get a salary increase within the past year. However, it is felt that there should be a commensurate increase in money paid for the additional arduous task of grading the national exam papers—about a month's involvement. Most all teachers in the secondary schools are involved in this. Also, the house masters of the individual dorms (10 here at St. Augustine's) receive an additional 10,000 cedis (~ \$1)/month. Needless to say that there is a demand that this also be increased. At this early June date of publication of our DNL, the issue still has not been resolved.

Bits 'n Pieces

► In the first week of April four candidates entered the Pre-novitiate Program at Moreau House in Butumayegbu: **James Baachie, Anthony Koomson, Augustus Mensah** and **Jacob Mensah**. Their studies during this year of formation will include Man's Relationship to God, Revelation through Jesus Christ and His Church, Christian Living and Prayer, as attended to by their director, **Fr. Bob Gilmour**. An annex of Moreau House serves as the residence for the four Brothers who are on the staff at the Skills Center.

► Our 6 Holy Cross Brothers who are at the University of Cape Coast have now completed their final exams and will be engaged in a variety of mini-ministries, as well as home vacations, during the months until school reopens in September.

► Our young talented artist in the District is recently professed **Bro. David Kpobi**. During his novitiate year, David conducted art class at the nearby School for the Deaf as his mini-apostolate experience. He

was so well received that the headmaster, supported by board members, appealed to the District Formation Council to allow David to continue on a regular basis after completing his novitiate. Thus given approval, David is now viably engaged in teaching at the school for one year only before beginning his studies for degree in Art at the university, building upon the skills he acquired in secondary school to develop his clearly exceptional innate artistic gifts.

► The Catholic Students Union (CATHSU) of St. Augustine’s College sponsored a weeklong program of activities from June 5th—12th at which Catholic students from other local schools also attended. **Brothers Nicholas Arthur, Kenneth Goode and Robert Koomson** contributed to the occasion by giving talks to the assembly, respectively on the topics, Chastity, the Papacy, and the Eucharist.

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*Editor’s note: The following is an adapted version of an original article forwarded to me by **Sr. Dolores Bray, CSC**. It is of sufficient merit, I think, to warrant its inclusion in this newsletter as a much deserved commendation to all in our own Holy Cross Family (and others) who teach or have taught, as well as encouragement to those now preparing to become teachers—indeed a noble profession/ministry!*

WHAT TEACHERS “DO”

The dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, a CEO, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?" He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers: "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach. Furthermore, my computer company's products with further developments in audio-visual technology will one day reduce the teacher's role mainly to that of a classroom prefect."

To stress his point he said to another guest, "You're a teacher, Susan. Be honest. What is it you do as a teacher that would be a valid argument against my assertion?"

Susan, who had a reputation for honesty and frankness replied, "You want to know what I “do” when I teach? I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could. When a struggling student makes a C+, I give him/her a “high five”, letting them know they are “SOMBODY” of no small worth—and dignity! I make kids appreciate the ‘silent time’ of a 40 minute study hall or as provided within the classroom to think more deeply on the subject matter just given. You want to know what I do? I make kids wonder. I make them question. I make them criticize. I make them write. I make them read, read, read. I make them show all their work in math and perfect their final drafts in English.

I make them understand that if you have the brains, and follow your heart, and if someone ever tries to judge you by what you do just because you don't go along with “what people say”, you must not let this deter you from doing what you know you ought to do. When their words or actions unnecessarily cause another pain, I make them apologize and mean it. And I try to give them reason to hope with realistic meaningful purpose in an imperfect world with imperfect people!

Susan paused and then continued. “You want to know what I do? I MAKE A DIFFERENCE! What do you do?”

—anonymous

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