



GHANA

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

THE WEST AFRICA DISTRICT CHAPTER 2014

Holy Cross Today



From December 16 to 23, 2014, the District of West Africa held its 16th District Chapter at the District Center in Brafoyaw. There were some 50 members present including Midwest Provincial Br. Chester Freel, C.S.C., and Fr. Luke Mihando, C.S.C., special observer from the District of East Africa. The Chapter was moderated by Bishop John Bonaventure Kwofie, C.S.P., Diocese of Sekondi-Takoradi.

The Chapter was prefaced by a Morning Recollection period which was presided over by Fr. Isidorebonabom, SJ, of the Jesuit community that is the adjacent neighbor to our District compound. He gave a most inspiring reflection comprehensively covering many common aspects of our religious life related to our personal awareness as Brothers of Holy Cross; related to our own spiritual growth and contribution as a community member. This was very well abetted by slide projection of photos and topics on the front chapel wall.

In the opening of the first planning session of the Chapter, Br. Chester expressed his hopes that this year's chapter would be viewed in some future years as a milestone for the District.

Br. Chester later also served as a substitute Moderator when Bishop John had to take leave to attend to the weekend affairs in his diocese. This was one of several "firsts" for our District Chapter, none of the preceding ones has had a Provincial as a Moderator, nor had Br. Chester ever served as a Moderator at any Chapter. The Bishop returned Sunday evening. While Br. Chester was wearing two hats for respective roles in the Chapter he continued to give significant input on matters under discussion, especially where recent directives, if not legislation of which the delegates had not been aware.



The Chapter Steering Committee

THE WEST AFRICA DISTRICT CHAPTER

Surely, it must be rare, if ever, that a Bishop has been Moderator of a Chapter, at least in Holy Cross history, not just in our District. This resulted from the fact that some months ago the then priest, Fr. John, Csp, had accepted the invitation from Br. Daniel to be our Chapter Moderator. Shortly after that he was appointed Bishop. Nonetheless, he told Daniel that he would still very much like to be the Moderator—to our no small benefit as was soon recognized in Chapter proceedings. Needless to say, that it was encouraging, indeed, to see the Bishop Moderator appear in short sleeves, an expression of his intent to be truly one with us.



Bishop John with Moderator, John Kwofie



Fr. Bob Gilmour, C.S.C.,
Secrétaire par excellence

The Chapter delegates focused on: Mission, Ministry and Vocation Planning; Religious Life; Vocation and Formation; Finances; and Leadership and Authority. The extensive preparation several months prior to the Chapter resulted in an efficient unfolding manner owing to the members' familiarity with the topics presented at the Plenary Sessions.

Having completed two terms as District Superior, Br. Daniel stepped down as Br. Michael Amakyi took his place as the new District Superior. The five members of the District

Council are: Asst. District Superior Br. Nicholas Arthur, Brothers John Affum, Paul Mensah, Vincent Ntsiful and Augustus Mensah. It should be of interest that the election of Br. Michael Amakyi, is another first of several that relate to this Chapter—the first time a previous District Superior has been re-elected. There are now 52 professed Ghanaian Brothers, all Chapter



Delegates joining in Bishop John's
blessing on Br. Michael and his
five District Council members



delegates. Br. Michael served two full terms from 1996 to 2002. His re-election clearly indicates the members' confidence in his capability to lead the District to attain the statement of the theme of this 2014 Chapter: **“Readiness to Meet the Future of the Challenges of the Signs of Our Times.”**

CATHSU VISITS LEPROSARIUM

On Saturday November 22, Catholic Students traveled to St. Padre Pio Catholic Rehabilitation Centre in Ahotokorum, Cape Coast. This is the leprosarium that treats persons in the Cape Coast region. It is conducted by Sisters Patricia, DMJ, and Monica, DMJ, of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, with Fr. Philip Addo, a diocesan priest, who conducts the Child Care Center.

All Catholic schools in Ghana have a Catholic Student Union. St. Augustine's College has 96 members in CATHSU who participate in various religious activities enabling them to more fully understand Catholicism and its priority to reach out to others in need. This visit to the leprosarium is one such activity that seems to have become an annual event shared with other Catholic high schools in the archdiocese. In the past few years St. Augustine's has provided its accommodations for this program in which many Catholic schools participate during the long vacation period.



All 96 of the Augustco CATHSU members and 2 non-Catholics boarded the large Augustco bus early in the morning for the event with Br. Maxwell Kyeremeh, C.S.C. Using their own resources the students had earlier

purchased large quantities of packaged and canned foods along with personal items which were presented to the Sisters for the lepers. The persons generally residing in the leprosarium are those who had been successfully treated and cured of leprosy or still undergoing treatment. The disease is no longer communicable. There is in some cases



the need for children of the lepers

to have a place to stay, for which the Child Care Center has been established. Even though the former leper may now have a clean bill of health there still remains a form of stigmatism associated with the disease. Consequently, some who have been cured are not accepted back into their former homes/communities, so some of these are allowed to remain at the Home. All things considered CATHSU, indeed, is a most noteworthy religious organization for students to live more fully Christian lives.



HOLY CROSS FAMILY MINISTRIES

by Br. Patrick Baah, C.S.C.

October is universally observed among Catholics as the month wherein Catholics singly or in groups, pray the Rosary. Clearly, it is a significant devotion acknowledged by members of the Holy Cross Family Rosary organization. There were two major activities that purposely took place within that month: the Try Prayer Contest; and the Rosary Outreach Program. Prizes to deserving schools and individual students were presented to the former while the latter was an effort to contact local parish communities and schools in order to encourage their devotion to Mary, most effectively attained through Mary's most special prayer—the Rosary.



The theme used throughout the Rosary outreach was selected from the Magnificat: “He feeds the hungry with good things.” This message was well received by most all those who were contacted through the Outreach program. The most profound and remarkable event was to take the school administration and students of Queen of Peace School in Cape Coast through a Marian pilgrimage, which in this instance was a Catholic spiritual journey which produced a profound effect on the staff and students.

The program consisted in making a “pilgrimage” from the school to its Marian Shrine. Leading the procession were the little ones who carried flowers and sang Marian hymns on the way to the shrine. There they prayerfully recited the Rosary while gazing on the statue of the Blessed Virgin.

After recitation of the Rosary, Br. Patrick Baah, C.S.C., gave a reflection on the message: “He feeds the hungry with good things.” This was followed by a Marian Consecration prayer. Then all sang the Magnificat which seemed to charge the atmosphere with a sense of Mary's presence with those making the pilgrimage. Concluding the program, the children placed flowers at the feet of Mary's statue as an expression of their gratitude to Mary for her motherly concern for her children.



Though the October Devotion to Mary Queen of the Rosary is a relatively short period on the Church's calendar, it is the hope of those in the Holy Cross Family Rosary ministry that there be a realization among all that Mary's Rosary is a viable devotion throughout the whole year. Thus may our lives be transformed with a greater love of Mary leading to a greater love of God and neighbor as she proclaims in her Magnificat. It is thus that through her powerful intercession, our lives may help to bring hope where there is sadness, light to dispel darkness, and everlasting joy in a world so sorely in need.

ARRIVAL DAY AT ST. AUGUSTINE'S COLLEGE

On Friday, 24 October, the new group of some 600 young who were enrolled as first year 10th grade boarding students arrived at St. Augustine's College. With the 11th and 12th graders preceding their arrival a month earlier, the school and dorm facilities were now in readiness to accommodate the new members of Augustus's family. This gives a total enrollment of some 1700 boarding students residing in 11 Houses/dormitories with a teaching staff of some 80 men and women. There are no non-boarders. The Augustus compound comprises about 120 acres of land including a very large athletic field which more than provides for its soccer and sports activities. Clearly its size and facilities would compare with many colleges, even some universities in the USA.

St. Augustine's College is actually a secondary senior high school in regard to its academic curriculum. The name of the school was given while Ghana was yet



The Augustus Cadet Corps helps students get settled in whatever way they can.



All students bring a mattress and other personal items such as a washing bucket and machete for grass-cutting. Cell phones are prohibited but teachers mediate calls to parents.

a colony of Great Britain, according to the British manner of naming secondary schools including the term, "college," to designate secondary school status. One new dorm has just been completed and another is now underway. Also, a new classroom building has been completed. This student enrollment is beyond the school's capacity but the Ministry of Education keeps assigning more students than the original number submitted to them by the Headmaster of St. Augustine's. The activity involved in processing the individual students (filling out forms, settling in respective dorms/halls with personal belongings, each with his own mattress), is no little undertaking and awesome to behold whomever may have been present as an otherwise, non-involved observer at the scene. But by early evening only the array of many canopies, now barren except for desks and benches, gave evidence of the earlier day's activity as the new students were now firmly established

in their respective dormitories.

There was an evening social activity, singing and dancing, and formal welcome to the newcomers. Fortunately, there was no power-outage throughout the day to impair communications, nor to prevent moderate volume background music being provided for the occasion. Undoubtedly the Electric Company of Ghana had been informed of the need for continuous power for the whole day into evening. The school has been beset with very erratic power-outages recently with a total of three days and three nights of 12-hour prolonged outages.

Along with the school's top-rated academic program, the athletic program had won three trophies this year in soccer, basketball and volley ball in Ghana's Central Regional respective tourneys, a source of great pride for existing students and newcomers.



Tents are set to help in the registration process. An equal number of tents are to the right of those above.

SR. CYNTHIA BIENAAN PROFESSES FIRST VOWS

Holy Cross Sister Cynthia Godia Bienaan made her first temporary vows on November 16, 2014 at Our Lady of Loretto, Saint Mary's College. Coming from the Upper Volta Region of Ghana, she began her religious formation with the Sisters of the Holy Cross in September 2009 on the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows. Following her profession of vows in November she returned to Ghana. Sr. Cynthia had her Thanksgiving celebration on December 7, 2014 at Holy Cross Church, Kasoa, where the sisters live and minister. She was joined by the other Holy Cross Sisters in Ghana in ministries elsewhere. Some Brothers from the District were also in attendance.

Sr. Cynthia has written a most edifying and inspirational reflection on her mindset in her extended novitiate, seeming to approach this first temporary profession as the beginning of a last commitment to the Lord. Liberty was taken in editing her more lengthy statement, hopefully not diminishing to any serious extent the essence of her thoughts. She wrote:

“On November 16 as I stood in front of the altar at the church confessing publicly my love for the Lord and my commitment to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, I felt something different, something deeper. Deeper than what attracted me to religious life and Holy Cross initially and what has sustained me to come this far. It was a feeling that I do not think I will ever find the right words to describe, not even in any of the six different languages I speak. A feeling of finding myself at a point that I realized how unworthy I am, how weak I am, how small I am. Yet in this very low state of mine the Lord bestows so much blessings on me by loving me. Love that has no conditions attached to it, love that “hurts” to my bones, love that pierces my heart with joy so that all I can think about is to return it. Return this love by loving God with all that I have and all that I am--loving the people of God with all the strength in me. “The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.” (Magnificat-Lk 1-49).



Left to right: Sister Vronique Wiedower, President of the Sisters of the Holy Cross congratulating Sr. Veronica at St Mary's; the mother and family of Sr. Cynthia at Kasoa; and Sr. Cynthia expressing her thanks to all attending the Thanksgiving celebration in Kasoa.

EDITORIAL: THE EBOLA FACTOR WITHIN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Former UN Secretary Kofi Annan recently stated that “Ebola’s victims are the poor.” And Liberia is the poorest of the poor nations, now with the highest per capita ebola deaths of any other country, still struggling to recover its “basket case economy” in the wake of its devastating Civil War more than a decade ago. Truly, many of Liberia’s population are among the worldwide 800 million persons who go to bed hungry each night. And even more have very poor diets, greatly lacking in proper nutrition, creating a very poor immune system, thus conditioning them to become prime targets for ebola. At the onset of the plague, among its other deprivations, Liberia’s medical facilities and personnel sadly lacked the wherewithal to have the benefit of up-to-date medical technology to treat its ebola victims. Reason enough why the epidemic spread so quickly and violently in Liberia.

God’s Providence gives full allowance for one to use the free will he gives to humankind, which greatly influences most all unfolding events in our existential setting, including a now realized abuse in ecology. Surely, it is owing to big business interests and governments of the prosperous nations, who continue to exploit the poor nations, to use them as a source for enriching their own well-being. CNN news reported recently that the number of billionaires in the world has doubled since the global economic collapse! Thus, it is the poor in most third world countries, owing to a lack of proper medical benefits and hygienically poor environment, that are the prime targets of ebola—one only needs to see the statistics of African countries hardest hit by ebola.

However, at long last these poor ebola afflicted nations, especially Liberia and Sierra Leone, are getting well-deserved huge assistance from the US and Great Britain, respectfully. Sad, indeed, that had these millions in funding aid to combat ebola, been grants in aid some years earlier toward economic recovery, the ebola plague surely with a more developed economy to provide a healthier standard of living, conjoined with medical technology, could have inhibited such rapid progress of the disease, in creating a more viable program to eradicate ebola. A case in point is Ghana, which has a recognized moderately healthy economy, had no evidence of even one ebola victim. And its economically faired neighbor Cote D’Ivoire, separating it from Liberia, had relatively few ebola cases reported. Hopefully, these severely stricken countries now have some significant awareness that continuing aid by the world community is essential for economic recovery.

Occurrences of major disasters, such as ebola, might create a problem for the religious believer. But God does not abandon humankind, though all seems to void this truth, when one is trying to cope with the terrible pain and suffering from ebola or any other source. But God does not suddenly appear to remove the Cross from our lives, this not done even for His Son. Rather, in His own time and wisdom, God does bring bad circumstances to a good end. Something bad is not thereby evil. The latter is in the moral category and is caused by our refusal to accept what God ordains. Adversity can be a grace-filled opportunity. Who of us who are older cannot look back on the hard times, severe illness or adversity, and now see the good it contributed toward a fuller human existence that caused us to question God’s wisdom at the time of endurance. Clearly, the ebola crisis has been the opportunity for millions to reach out to help the ebola victims, some even risking their lives in coming to their aid. One Liberian woman of whom I have heard has recovered from ebola, yet was stigmatized with the ebola branding-iron, so to speak, as have many others who recovered. This has led her to organize a community where for whatever time, these equally marked persons live together in a viable community, supporting one another.

And a few years ago a newly enlarged St. Joseph Parish Church, of which our former Holy Cross community were members, has been built that is more than double the size of the original. Now it is always jam-packed on Sundays for all three Masses. For the St. Joseph parishioners there is no doubt that there now exists a much greater awareness in experiencing with others a truly Christian community: sharing, caring, supporting—indeed, liberated from the oppressive force of ebola, a spirit that should remain as a permanent factor with humanity enriched, to open oneself more fully to God and/in reaching out to others, no longer constricted by the evil forces that prevail.

The Christian firmly believes that God’s plan for humankind is a loving relationship with them, not destruction; It is through adversity more than prosperity by which we have become more fully human, sensitive, other-centered—Christ-centered persons—indeed, liberated from the oppressive force of any evil—God’s providential design for us, His grace ever sufficient for this.

News Briefs

Br. Nicholas Arthur, C.S.C., Asst. District Superior, attended the District of East Africa Chapter as an Observer the week after Christmas. Fr. Luke Mihindo, C.S.C. of DEA, had attended the District of West Africa Chapter as an observer the week before Christmas.



Br. Dan and Fr. Bob Gilmour attended the International Congregation of Major Superiors meeting in Rome in October.



After attending the first weeks of the Chapter following the Catholic University semester break, the scholastics took their respective vacations after Christmas. They will return to the new semester of studies shortly after the Holy Cross Family celebration of the Feast of St. Andre, 6th January at the District Center.



As a hobby, Br. Tom Dillman, C.S.C., has a small “farm” on an otherwise unused area of land at Augusco, including the establishing of a sizeable banana grove. He thus was able to supply 5 stalks of bananas to enhance the menu throughout the Chapter. And a sufficiency of oranges were provided from the District Center’s orange grove.

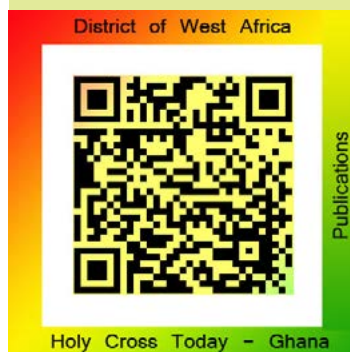
On the morning of 20th December there was no Chapter Plenary Session so that all delegates could attend the funeral of George Gillette, father of Br. Francisco Gillette, who is a member of the District.

Find us On-line!

The following quick-read code will take you to the website for the district of the Midwest Province of Brthers, of the Congregation of Holy Cross. The district covers the region of Ghana, West Africa.



Holy Cross Today - Ghana is the quarterly newsletter published by the Brthers of Holy Cross living in the District of West Africa. The District belongs to the Midwest Province of Brther of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Use the QR code to access the District’s website



Joy to the World!

*Christ the Lord is born today,
the Savior has appeared.
Earth echoes songs of angelic
choirs, archangels' joyful praise.
Today on earth his friends
exult: Glory to God in
the highest. Alleluia!*

—Christmas antiphon, Lauds

*The New Year appropriately
begins following the celebration
of the Savior's birth. By this
manifestation of God's unbounded
love, let us confidently grasp
each new day, giving generously
in response to its unfolding
grace-filled opportunities.*



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