

# 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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## ST. JOHN'S CELEBRATES GOLDEN JUBILEE

On Monday, November 24th, St. John's Secondary School in Sekondi, began weeklong festivities to celebrate the occasion of its Golden Jubilee. **Bro. Joe Annan**, CSC, related that there was lots of activity on the school compound to complete preparations to make things beautiful for both buildings and campus. Buildings had been repainted, flowers and shrubs of all kinds had been planted, not the least of these being the almost 1,000 teak saplings planted on the campus perimeter several months ago—and new monuments have been erected depicting the founder and the school crest. Perhaps the most striking addition to the campus is the new arched gate into the campus with the newly paved road leading up to the building complex. Skyy Power FM, whose owner and CEO is an Old Student of St. John's had given a lot of air time to the school and Holy Cross. A song had been composed by one of the students to celebrate the 50th Jubilee of the School and this was played frequently on the FM station!

The Speech and Awards Day was held on Saturday on the athletic field just below the school building complex. Preliminary to this activity was the ceremony of unveiling of the School Crest Monument and the Bust of Founder by **Bishop John Martin Darko** of the Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese. The ceremony was embellished by the Takoradi based Naval Band and Marching Corps.

Along with the many other dignitaries present were former Holy Cross Headmasters: **Brother Raymond Papenfuss** and **Mr. Jerome Chandler**, a former Holy Cross Brother. Also coming for the occasion from the US were **Bro. William Gates** and **Bro. Eduardo Michalik**, who were among the pioneers for Holy Cross in Ghana. Of the many speakers on this occasion **Bro. Joseph Tsiquaye** spoke in behalf of the General and Midwest Province Councils. Later, **Bro. Joe Annan, Headmaster**, gave an update on the present status of St. John's. While acknowledging



the glorious past of the school, he used the occasion to stress some very important needs of the school hopefully to be resolved sooner than later—a new large bus, especially to provide transport to staff members, another dormitory facility to alleviate resent serious overcrowding, and more staff houses to attract new teachers. The Guest Speaker was an “Old Saint” of St. John's, **Professor Kofi Blay** of Delaware State University, USA. He made a generous donation to the school at the conclusion of his erudite speech, which he hoped would encourage a generous response from other Old Saints.

Following the various speeches, students were given awards for their outstanding achievement in academic or extracurricular activities in school. Then tribute was given to persons, who have contributed in a significant way over these years by their personal services to the school. A plaque of commendation for years of service was given to each of the former Headmasters, including **Brothers Fred McGlynn** and **Rex Hennel** both *in absentia*. A Goodwill Message from Bro. Rex Hennel, first Headmaster of St. John's, had been read earlier in the program above. Also, **Brothers William Gates** and **Vincent Gross** each were

given a plaque for their many years of dedicated service to the school.

On Sunday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, a Eucharistic Thanksgiving was held at St. John's with **Bishop John Darko** as main celebrant, which concluded the occasion of St. John's Golden Jubilee celebration.

**Brief History of Holy Cross at St. John's.** The Brothers of Holy Cross have been in administration and/or otherwise staff members at St. John's for the past 45 years. The school was started in 1952 by **Fr. John Beckers, SMA**, a Dutch priest, who had been invited by **Archbishop William T. Porter** of Cape Coast to undertake the project. However, Fr. Beckers became ill and handed over the school to the Ghanaian priest, **Fr. Francis Buah**, who became the first Headmaster of St. John's. Fr. Beckers died shortly after, and Archbishop Porter gave the school its name, St. John, in his memory.



In December 1957, invited by Archbishop Porter through the Superior General of Holy Cross, **Brothers Rex Hennel** and **Eduardo Michalik** left ND for Ghana, there to be joined by **Br. Donald Allen** from Bangladesh to comprise this first Holy Cross community in West Africa. **Br. William Gates** arrived some months later to join the three in Ghana. It was the first return of Holy Cross to Africa in 100 years when the congregation was forced to abandon its mission in Tunisia.

Bro. Rex, the new Headmaster, viewed the school facilities as being somewhat "primitive", however acknowledging that the school did seem to be well-established even though neither of the

two priests administering the school were trained educators. In the words of Rex, "They did not have our history of education to rely on, nor did they have the resources we had."

At the time the brothers took over the school there existed the main building with four classrooms, the headmaster's office and school office and the classroom block which also had four classrooms. Two new buildings had just been completed: the brother's residence with very nice accommodations, including a chapel; and the science building. The latter had two classrooms with respective labs and storage rooms. While the brothers' house had both showers and toilets, the students' toilets were located down the hill in the bush—holes in the ground and running water, but poorly constructed. Rex recalls spending many hours spraying and sweeping up mosquitoes—a dustpan full every day! The new school year began with double streams in all areas.

From the somewhat humble beginnings, there was an immediate move to expand the existing facilities to make a more viable educational institution. The archdiocese paid for the construction of a second floor on top of the classroom block to include library, art room and bookstore. A new laterite road created a more direct route from the main road to the main building, albeit very slippery when wet; numerous times students were called upon to push masters' cars out of the ditch bordering the road.

During the next few years Bro. Rex was able to contact donors in the States, who were quite generous in contributing to a continuing building project, along with grants from the Propagation of the Faith, and from the surplus of salaries of the brothers. The buildings were constructed "in the bush" with small cleared area surrounding them. Much of the work of clearing the bush area as the campus expanded was done by the brothers. One had to be careful—a nest of spitting cobras was discovered quite near the garage. In the beginning only natural paths of laterite connected buildings, the use of available funds for making pavement walkways was considered to be a less priority than other needs of the school at this time.

When Holy Cross took over there were no boarding students and about 300 day students. At the end of 6-year term of Br. Rex as Headmaster there were 105 boarding students and 255 day

students. The brothers had to learn the system that was generally in use in the country both regarding the English academic system and the policies pertaining to the resident students. At St. John's School today there are 1025 students, of whom more than 500 are boarders living in 6 dormitories, these latter buildings funded by the Brothers of Holy Cross.

Following Bro. Rex as Headmaster were: **Bro. Gerard Mason, CSC** (for a brief time), **Bro. Jerome Chandler, CSC** (1963-67), **Bro. Frederick McGlynn, CSC** (1967-73), and **Bro. Raymond Papenfuss, CSC** (1973-79). After Bro. Raymond's term of office ended, the District of West Africa withdrew from administration of St. John's School, and a non-Holy Cross Headmaster was appointed by the Ministry of Education.

One of the last buildings put up under the auspices of the Brothers of Holy Cross is the large, strikingly beautiful chapel, both inside and out, sitting on the northwest edge of the campus ridge. This was built in memory of the parents of Bro. Raymond Papenfuss, CSC, with the money he had inherited from them.

In the beginning St. John's was a 5<sup>th</sup> form secondary school under the British system of education. This is comparable to a combined junior and senior high school in the American system. According to information given by Bro. Rex, when the Brothers took over, the school was academically very poor. In the first year that the Brothers took over 40% of the students passed the National Exams for the School Certificate, as compared to the previous year when only 32% passed. A determined effort was being made to upgrade the status of the school, but it was difficult to attract better students. Common Entrance Exam results showed many at the bottom of the list of those eventually accepted at St. John's, and the average on the applications was 16 or older. In academic circles, the school was hardly known.

However, in general, Bro. Rex states: "The attitude of students was extremely positive and good. They were most happy to receive us, (but) unfortunately expected miracles immediately. They accepted what we did, though much was contrary to what was common in schools in Ghana. For example, Brother Eduardo was Dean of Discipline (the Headmaster usually assumes this role in Ghana's schools). He had students dig

10 buckets of dirt as punishment. They were very studious. It was pathetic in many cases to see how hard they worked with such little chance of succeeding due to their extremely poor educational background." The brothers were impressed by the religious mentality among the students—some 15 or 20 boys were baptized each year.

"No small problem was due to the teachers, themselves, who were ill-prepared or more concerned about finishing up a dart game in the staff room than getting to class on time. But with patience and generally good disposition in the staff things improved considerably.

"There was no small difficulty in adjusting to the English system, which is true for any teacher having been brought up and having taught for some years within the American system, and with no need to follow a strict syllabus upon which the national exam was based, the latter the sole criterion for graduation.

"The Midwest Province was most generous in sending very capable teachers in the early years—two a year, which made a tremendous difference in the tone of the academic environment. Also, the Brothers community provided funds to build several staff houses, which enabled the school to attract some capable teachers, who otherwise would not have considered teaching at St. John's." A significant contribution toward maintenance of the school facilities came with the arrival of **Bro. Vincent Gross, CSC** in 1968. **Fr. Bob Gilmour, CSC** came from the Southern Province in 1975 to be the school's chaplain; he also with Bro. William Gates taught religion and engaged in campus ministry.

A very good beginning had been made and 6 years later when Bro. Rex left Ghana the school was beginning to gain some recognition as an academic institution. In 1962, his final year at St. John's, Bro. Rex acquiesced to the government's request to add a Sixth Form to the school. This was done with some reluctance, as the school facilities and staff at this time were insufficient to conduct a truly viable 6<sup>th</sup> Form program, though efforts were made to remedy this as soon as possible. All things considered, it would take a few more years before St. John's became a top school in the nation.

**Bro. Fred Mclynn**, who became Headmaster in 1967, remarks that owing to the very fine work of his predecessor, **Bro. Jerome Chandler**, "I found

many things in place for St. John's to rise up to greatness. Discipline was good. We had a talented staff who was experienced. As I recall, about half were expatriate and half Ghanaian. Most of the student body was made up of boys from rural areas, many from the Western Region, but also from Ashanti and other regions, a few from the north (and some from Accra)." Several years preceding Bro. Fred, the school's increasing reputation began attracting very capable students. The average results on the national exams of previous years were remarkably improved two years later. Fred recalls that, "The results St. John's had in 1969 were outstanding. I found that St. John's results were among the best in the country." Similar results were attained throughout the remaining years St. John was under Holy Cross administration.

Unfortunately, after withdrawing from the administration of the school, the Brothers were not in a commanding position to determine academic policies, direct student affairs or staff assignments, and especially no longer in control of school finances. Though the Brothers for reason of available personnel withdrew from administration at St. John's, there were still several Brothers on the teaching staff and Bro. Vincent as Director of Maintenance. However, it was soon evident that a serious deteriorating process began to occur in the operation of the school regarding both finances and academic performance. There were increasing signs of dissatisfaction from all concerned with the operation of St. John's.

It should be noted that the political upheavals that Ghana experienced over a prolonged period gradually took its toll on the economy. Clearly with the devaluation of the currency, the real salary of teachers and other governmental employees rapidly diminished. Many very

capable Ghanaian teachers left to teach in neighboring countries where salaries were significantly higher. Not surprisingly devious means were used by both teachers and administrators to compensate for income. One result was a rampant practice of many administrators in schools to accept poor students, not otherwise qualified, if they were willing to pay a considerable bribe. Similarly, poorly performing students were not dismissed as had been done before. It was common practice for teachers to take on additional jobs that deprived them of full attention to classroom duties.

These factors along with others not here necessary to list resulted in a significant deterioration of academic performance and lack of morale in both staff members and student body. Ultimately, St. John's Old Saints, students, parents of students and staff members felt that the only resolution of the problem would be to have the Brothers of Holy Cross resume administration of the school. Providentially, **Brother Joe Annan, CSC**, had now completed studies in the States to equip him for the headmaster's position, and September, 2001, the Ministry of Education appointed him as the new headmaster of St. John's, and **Brother Sylvester Quaye, CSC** became the assistant headmaster.

With a little over a year with Bro. Joe Annan as headmaster of St. John's, it is evident that a significant improvement has been made in the academic program, as attested by remarks from faculty, students and parents. And there has been a much needed renovation of facilities, also in landscape and roads, these still in process, and owing to the enthusiastic response of the alumni and others directly or indirectly related to the school. There seems to prevail among all a renewed hope that St. John's will return in the not so distant future to its former glory.

## DISTRICT CHAPTER: "LIVING THE DREAM"

The District of West Africa held its District Chapter the week before Christmas from December 17<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>. There were 22 capitulants to the Chapter, a significant increase over the previous Chapter, even with 4 members *in absentia*. In 1999 there were 14 capitulants with all the members of the District present at that time.

Clearly the District has been blessed with an influx of new members. Considerable growth has occurred in other areas over the past 3 years, as well, which gave sufficient support to the theme of this year's Chapter: "Living the Dream".

In addition to the increase in numbers, construction has now been completed on new buildings, such that there are now four separate

houses for the various stages of formation: Pre-candidates and candidates at St. Joseph's Hall in Sekondi on St. John's campus, pre-novices at Moreau House in Butumagyegbu, novices at Bl. Andre House and scholastics at Dujarie House, the latter two both at the District Center. The new Holy Cross Vocational Training Center has been completed. And the Brothers have resumed the administrative positions at St. John's Secondary School with **Bro. Joe Annan** as Headmaster and **Bro. Sylvester Quaye** as his assistant.

There were three main committees presenting papers to the Chapter: Planning and Finance; Recruitment and Formation; and Religious Life Planning. The statements and resolutions proposed by the committee were freely discussed by the capitulants with resulting changes and additions before

approval by the Chapter of the final revisions. It was encouraging to note the vocal participation by the temporary professed religious at the chapter in discussing various issues. The recently professed Brothers were given the privilege by **Bro. Michael**, District Superior to vote on all Statements and Recommendations made at the Chapter, though not allowed to vote in the election for District Superior and other council members.

**Sr. Helene Sharp, CSC** proved a most capable moderator for the Chapter, keeping things running smoothly and encouraging participation by some who may have seemed hesitant to express their views on given issues, and to re-direct discussion back to the topic when there was an undesired discussion on an irrelevant tangential topic. **Sr. Margaret Mary Nimo, CSC** also was an active participant in Chapter deliberations, from whose resourcefulness much benefit was gained.

**Brothers Eduardo Michalik, CSC** and **William Gates, CSC** were visitors at the Chapter, having come to participate in the Golden Jubilee

celebration of St. John's Secondary School. Having spent many years in the District, their comments were graciously received by the capitulants. **Brother John Bailanda, CSC** from the District of East Africa, who is in charge of Development in that District, also contributed in a meaningful way to the Chapter deliberations.



The Chapter was especially graced to have **Bro. Bob Fillmore**, Midwest Provincial and **Bro. Raymond Papenfuss**, Mission Procurator, present for the occasion. Either or both were very resourceful in clarifying issues that at times seemed to become bogged down owing to lack of certain specifics for a proper understanding of the point under discussion. The chapter proceedings, as well as social presence, were enhanced by other visitors.

Toward the end of the District Chapter, four members of the Associates of Holy Cross Accra Chapter addressed the capitulants. The main presentation was given by **Mr. Kwamina Assan**, coordinator of the Associates. The ensuing dialogue between Capitulants and the Associates made members considerably more aware of the value of the contribution of the latter to our Holy Cross ministry as an extension of this ministry, reaching into areas of need which the Brothers cannot meet. The Accra Chapter is four years old

having some 13 families and 30 members spread over 8 parishes in the Accra Metropolis.

While there were many statements and recommendations concerning the manner in attending to our spirituality, community life and ministries in "Living the Dream", it may be of interest to mention a few that have made a first appearance as formally approved Chapter recommendations.

One of these was: "Recognizing that the financial resources of the District are limited, to initiate a move towards financial self-sufficiency, the Chapter recommends that: a) Available district lands are developed into farmlands to reduce food expenditure by the end of the year 2003. b) The District Superior will put together a team to conduct feasibility studies towards the establishment of a basic educational institution by the end of March 2003." Another was the recommendation that, "A Justice and Peace Commission should be established in the District within 3 to 6 months following the Chapter."

In the wake of his capable performance directing the affairs of the District throughout his previous term, it was not surprising that **Brother Michael Amakyi** was re-elected District Superior on the first ballot. Subsequent elections filled out the members of the District Council. These were appointed by Bro. Michael to their respective roles as follows: **Bro. Daniel Dardoe**, Assistant Superior; **Fr. Bob Gilmour**, Secretary; **Bro. Nee Wayoe**, Formation; **Bro. Jerome Kroetsch**, Development and District Steward. Taking advantage of the opportunity of his presence at the

Chapter, the Provincial formally approved those elected to respective offices without further delay. Then followed an impressive ceremony in which he called the Superior and council members to be seated at the front of the assembly where he and those present, in turn, came forward to lay hands on each of the council members for the power of the Holy Spirit to be with them.

The Chapter was formerly closed on Sunday afternoon with appropriate remarks of appreciation made by **Bro. Nee Wayoe** in behalf of the Chapter to the Moderator and distinguished guests. In turn, the visitors were given an opportunity to express any closing remarks of their own. All was concluded with a short prayer service led by **Bro. William Gates**.

When all in our Holy Cross family in Ghana convened at the District Center for the celebration of the Christmas Liturgy, the final signing of the minutes of the Chapter was done, and each capitulants and visitor to the Chapter was given a beautiful booklet produced by **Fr. Bob Gilmour**, which contained the business of the Chapter deliberations and related information. (Fr. Bob, assisted in part by **Bro. Ebenezer Prah**, did the brunt of the secretarial work for the Chapter, for which all of us are deeply appreciative). After Mass and a few pictures of our Holy Cross family and a few visitors all were invited to the District "Sun House" (rooftop) for a social hour and fine Christmas dinner, bringing to conclusion a most rewarding District Chapter experience for those attending.

## RELIGIOUS FORMATORS WORKSHOP

The District Center at Brafuyaw hosted another significant event for the Religious of Ghana. From September 16th to the 24th Religious Formators gathered at the Holy Cross Formation Center at Brafuyaw, Ghana for a Religious Formators' Workshop. Some 47 Religious Formators from 27 different Religious Communities and from nine different countries spent the week focusing their attention on the topic of "Assessment of Candidates for the Religious Life". At the workshop there were some 34 women and 13 men religious. The

animators / facilitators for the workshop were two: Sr. Sheila, a Holy Spirit Sister from India and Bro. Vitus, a Marist Brother from Nigeria. There were four sessions a day comprising both input from the facilitators and small group work and sharing and reports. The final evaluation by those attending gave the gathering high marks: input, material, accommodations, meals, liturgy etc.

It was a grand gathering and very helpful to all there attending.

Bob Gilmour CSC

## Visitors from Bangladesh



Br. Linus D'Rozario, Fr. Stephen Gomez, Br. Bijay Rodriguez

Following the international meeting of the major superiors in the Congregation of Holy Cross in Uganda in early September, **Fr. Stephen Gomes, CSC** and **Br. Bijay Rodrigues, CSC** came to visit

us here in Ghana. Fr. Stephen and Br. Bijay are Provincials of Sacred Heart Province and St. Joseph Province, respectively, in Bangladesh. The latter was especially interested in paying a visit to **Br. Linus D'Rozario** of the Brothers Province, who is presently assigned to teach in the Holy Cross Vocational Training Center in Takoradi. We regretted that their pending duties in Bangladesh could not allow them a more prolonged stay. It was most enjoyable to have them with us enabling us both to appreciate the internationality of our Holy Cross family through our shared experience brief though it may have been. It may well be that some future day in our respective ministries a greater sharing of personnel will prevail between the District (Province?) of West Africa and the Province of Bangladesh? God willing, let it become a reality.

## BROTHER KENNETH KUNDITANI MAKES FINAL VOWS



On Saturday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, **Brother Kenneth Kunditani, CSC**, made his final profession of vows at St. John Baptist Church in Adiembra - Kweikuma. All the members of the Holy Cross family in Ghana were present for the beautiful occasion, which was attended by relatives and friends of Bro. Kenneth, as well. Due to reasons of poor health, Ken's mother was unable to attend. The ceremony was held in the parish church

where Bro. Kenneth has been very actively involved in youth ministry. Bishop John Darko of the Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese was the main celebrant, being assisted by 8 priests and two deacons. The choral performance of three

different choirs of the parish joined by the congregation was superb, many Fanti hymns supplemented by several Christmas hymns in English.

The large church was filled to overflowing, and the youth in the parish were especially vocal with cheers and applause as Ken concluded his profession of vows, and again when he was presented with the Insignias of Profession: St. Joseph medal and small wooden Cross. The profession of vows by Bro. Kenneth was made to the Provincial of the Midwest Province, who had come for the occasion of the recent District Chapter. It was a splendid liturgical ceremony, which was followed by a social and dinner at the Holy Cross Skills Training Center. This latter was also occasioned by the dedication of the Holy Cross Skills Training Centre by Bishop Darko.

Bro. Kenneth is the fourth in line of five children of the same mother in a polygamous family. His father died before Ken was old enough to know him, but his Catholic mother had all her children baptized and raised as Catholics. Ken had completed school under the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception, attaining a certificate in carpentry and joinery. He then went obtained a Teachers Training certificate, enabling him to teach for 6 years in a Junior Secondary School

before entering the Holy Cross community as a candidate. After his first profession he became involved in teaching at the Holy Cross Skills Training Center in carpentry. He was given leave to attend St. Paul's Technical School in Kukurantumi to attain an advanced carpentry certificate. He then returned to Holy Cross Vocational Training Center to resume teaching. It was then decided that he would be working in the formation program of the District, and thus attended theological studies for one year at St. Peter's Major Seminary in Padu, Cape Coast. He presently assists Fr. Bob, Director of the Pre-novitiate in Butumagyebu. Kenneth also attended a mini-Business Administration course at the Ghana Institute for Management and Public Administration when he was appointed by the District Superior to become the new director of HCSTC in January 2002 to replace Bro. Jerome Kroetsch, who felt he had sufficiently spent

himself in his long tenure of 11 years as director of the school.

Bro. Kenneth learned about the Brothers of Holy Cross through a Brother of the Immaculate Conception, who had attended the Institute of Continuing Formation Program at the District Center. Ken had been taught by these Brothers in his younger years. He thus came in contact with Bro. Michael Amakyi, who was Vocational Director for the Holy Cross District of West Africa, and shortly later entered the formation program as a candidate. Brother Kenneth continues to be very active in ministering to the youth in St. John Baptist Parish, and among those present for the occasion of his final profession the many youth who are in his care were most demonstrative in their celebration of Ken's lifelong religious commitment to Christ as a member of the Holy Cross family.

*WE ARE APOSTOLIC RELIGIOUS WHO MANIFEST THE VISION AND HERITAGE OF HOLY CROSS IN WEST AFRICA. WE LIVE, WORK, AND PRAY TOGETHER AS HOPEFUL SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM. CONTINUING THE MISSION OF CHRIST, WE, AS EDUCATORS IN THE FAITH, WORK TO CREATE A MORE JUST AND HUMANE SOCIETY.*

*Mission Statement by the District Chapter – December, 2002*

### WHY EGYPT?

Did you question, Joseph, the Lord's command,  
as you made your way into Pharaoh's land?  
Where your ancestors had lived so long in dread,  
you now with family to Egypt fled.  
Could God not have chosen some other way  
to save Jesus, whom Herod sought to slay?  
At times we just can't see why God ordains  
that we must travel roads where darkness reigns.  
Yet you trusted in God to work things out—  
Joseph, pray that we, too, of this ne'er doubt!

—Bro. Tom Dillman

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### *Bits & Pieces*

▶ The students in the Skills program were given the opportunity this past year to take a government theory exam related to their vocational area. All received passing marks. Efforts will be made to prepare them now for the practical exam, which should make them more job-competitive.

▶ The Sisters of the Holy Cross in Kosoa ran into difficulties at the site of their new Center. Finally 7 different land disputes have been resolved, but now there is a problem getting local powers to approve their registration for the property. We pray that they may soon be able to build. In the meantime some of the land has been used for farming. The new site had been completely fenced in, but rogues have recently on two separate occasions removed some 500 ft of the vinyl covered woven wire! What to do?