

HOLY CROSS TODAY - GHANA

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

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3

FEBRUARY - MAY 2002

SKILLS CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Skills program began in 1982, following from a meeting of **Br. Raymond Papenfuss** with diocesan priest, **Fr. Andy Ghansah**. They were very concerned about the plight of the many who were unable to get into secondary schools. The Church provided for those being given academic education but not for others. They decided to take a more active role to help some of the many disadvantaged young men in Ghana, who for some reason or other were not able to gain an education within the existing school system. Especially in need were those who had aptitudes for acquiring skills in one or other of the building trades areas. Polytechnic schools here in Ghana, providing vocational training for such manual skills, require a secondary school certificate of any student seeking entrance into these institutions. Thus began the Skills Project, indeed a modest undertaking in which faith and hope surely surpassed material resources at hand toward fulfilling the dream.

Contact was made with the chief from Ketan, who agreed to have the school put in his area, which is a few kilometres from Sekondi. A cement slab about the size of a tennis court that was once a primary school was graciously accepted upon which to begin things. The chief had ordered a primary school in the area to help out, so one day all the kids went to the bush to cut bamboo and palm leaves. The teachers and school children erected a bamboo shelter under which the Skills Project began. Br. Raymond was able to find retired master craftsmen of various building trades, who were willing to pass their own experience and knowledge on to the younger generation.



HOLY CROSS VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER

He received a grant from an organization in New York (no longer in existence) for the development

of this project along with \$20,000 from Caritas Neerlandica in Holland. The Canadian High Commission in Accra purchased a pickup truck for the program, and the Knights of Marshall paid the teachers' salaries. Enrolment in the Skills Project has always been conditioned by a principle to help those who needed help most. Initially, the policy was to accept no student whose parents had income-producing jobs.

There were 20 students in the first group, who were taught one of the 4 skills: carpentry, masonry, auto mechanics and blacksmithing. Once the masons learned how to make cement blocks and build walls they began building the permanent structure under the bamboo shelter. The apprentice workers learned in the doing of all; it took a while, but they actually built their own school. Blacksmithing was soon dropped because it became clear that this skill had little future in Ghana.

Br. Raymond returned to the States in 1987 after continuing bouts with malaria, severe enough to become life threatening. (He there continues his ministry to the District of West Africa in his notable role as Mission Promoter, especially in procuring funds for the financial needs of the District, no small part of which has been in the interest of the Skills program).

Br. Vincent Gross was the next director of the Skills Project in addition to being director of maintenance at St. John's Secondary School.

Br. Joe Annan, then the Superior of the District, took over the direction of the program when Vincent found it necessary to take temporary leave for matters of health. At times **Br. Nee Wayoe** assisted Br. Joe when needs of the District required the latter's attention.

Around this time **Brother Daniel Dardoe** came to assist in the program, but in a minimal way as he was also attending the Polytechnic Institute in Takoradi. The program had lost some of its earlier momentum with the departure of some of the master teachers and the lack of full-time directors for the program as conditioned by the District infrastructure at this time.

Br. Jerome Kroetsch arrived in 1991, setting a new precedence in being appointed as the first, full-time director of the Skills Project. He had done general maintenance work at Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron for many years, before going to St. Joseph Industrial School in Bangladesh, this followed by an assignment in the Dominican Republic directing maintenance operations within the diocese. At the time Jerome took charge of things in the Skills program only 15 students were enrolled. These were taking carpentry under the direction of one master carpenter. The elderly master teaching auto mechanics had died just before Jerome came, causing this course to be closed. Jerome decided to reopen the auto mechanics class, and gradually set about reorganizing things.

Within the next few years the masonry course was re-established with Daniel as the instructor following his graduation from the Polytechnic school. A young man, who had graduated from the Skills program, was hired to teach the carpentry class.

To help fund the Skills program certain furniture projects were undertaken. Considerable profit came from the sale of tables, chairs, school desks and other house furnishings, all of which were made by the students.

The general public along with friends and benefactors were invited to an open house in 1998 at which various house furnishings were displayed. This affair considerably improved the status of the Skills program according to comments of those present. Many members of the Knights of Marshall attended; this organization had continued through the years contributing to some extent toward the funding of the program. Also, some small construction of houses were contracted as a source of income to the program, giving the opportunity for practical experience to both carpentry and mason students, as well.

The enrolment had gradually increased with the expansion of the Skills project. Classes were still being taught in the original building in Ketan with 75 students under its roof. Of course, the thatch roof and the original walls of clay blocks were now of zinc sheets and concrete blocks. The facilities were no longer sufficient to take care of all the students who were applying for entry into the Skills program.

Br. Jerome decided it was time to seriously consider building a larger facility, hoping to obtain help from Misereor in Germany, an organization known for granting aid in such projects. He spent many hours in detailing plans, including drawings of the proposed building by a local architect; numerous letters were exchanged between him and Misereor, who understandably withheld its approval until completely satisfied with all aspects of the project. The final revised proposal submitted by Jerome was approved in '96 for a grant of 200,000 DM. Truly obtaining this grant was a noteworthy accomplishment, and the District is truly grateful to Br. Jerome for his time and painstaking efforts that made it possible.

The new site would be on a few acres of available land at the St. Joseph Farm property, the latter operation in process of being closed

down. Construction got underway in February '97. Br. Raymond was successful in getting a grant from the Rostak Foundation for a large concrete mixer, which has been used extensively in all construction work done at the Skills Center since that time.

Construction on a building to be used for both administrative and classroom purposes that had begun in '99 is now completed. A separate building, which has both shower and toilet facilities, had been completed even before the main shop. The students very much appreciate the opportunity to wash off the dirt and grime from their labor in the shop or from doing construction work. Continuing as was done from the very beginning back in '82, Skills students have done the majority of the work in putting up the new buildings.

Br. Jerome was happy to get certain supplies and equipment from **St. Edwards High School**, Lakewood, Ohio, after the general shop classes were closed down. Unfortunately many tools and most of the machinery had already been disposed of before Jerome made his request. Not being able to make contact with donors for these necessary items, he asked Br. Raymond for assistance to pursue this aim from his stateside office, where more direct contact was possible with various organizations known to provide grants for such needs as this. Raymond was successful in obtaining all that was on Jerome's wish list, even more! In October '01 a large container of assorted machinery, tools and supplies arrived at the new Skills Center.

Coincidental with the acquisition of materials and supplies for running the Skills program, qualified teachers began arriving on the scene to provide an adequate staff for the increase in students. **Br. Linus D'Rozario** had arrived in latter September '01 from Bangladesh. His experience from having been on the staff at (Holy Cross) St. Joseph School of Industrial Trades for many years prior to his coming to

Ghana enabled him to be quite helpful in installing the machines.

All installation of machinery and equipment is now complete, this occupying most of the ground floor area. On the first floor is the general working area for the shop. This floor area is about the size of 4 side-by-side tennis courts in length and half that measure in width.



(Brothers) 2nd row : Matthew Sabogu, Kenneth Kunditani, Linus D'Rozario,
1st row: Daniel Dardoe, Emmanuel Mino, Jerome Kroetsch, Patrick Baah

The financing of the program has taken on considerable new dimensions with the move into this new Center. Prior to this Holy Cross Brothers staffing the school received no salaries. Clearly, continuance of this practice was quite unrealistic in view of the District not yet having attained its goal of financial self-sufficiency, much less for such a generous gesture of donated full-time teaching Brothers to the program.

There are now 6 Brothers directly working at the Holy Cross Skills Training Center. Also, there are 3 non-Holy Cross teachers on the staff, all of whom are graduates of the Skills program. With the enrolment now at 120 students, it has become necessary to assign a minimal tuition fee to help cover operational expenses. Included in this expense is the operation of a school bus driven by Br. Jerome, which transports students from more remote areas to the school each day. The sale of various furniture items made at the Center continues to help cover these operating expenses.

The original philosophy of helping especially students without sufficient funds to pay school fees has been retained. Br. Raymond has established an endowment fund for the Skills program to help such students in need. As stated in his May '02 mission newsletter, he hopes to complete this fund by the end of this year. To fully endow teachers' and security men's salaries, and to provide 225 perpetual scholarships for students, about \$500,000 will be necessary. He now has about 25% of that goal in the Skills endowment fund.

There are 18 students who live in either of the two houses formerly used by the St. Joseph Farm staff. To cover the cost of boarding fees, these young men have various work assignments on campus. These and other students, as well, also do work on campus to pay part or all of their school fees.

In January '02 **Br. Kenneth Kunditani** was appointed principal of the Holy Cross Skills Training Center. **Br. Jerome Kroetsch** is now project adviser; he also teaches auto mechanics and drives the school bus. Other Holy Cross Brothers on the staff are: **Br. Emmanuel Mino** – registrar, attendance and school fees, carpentry and math instructor; **Matthew Sabogu** – director of maintenance and carpentry instructor; **Linus D'Rozario** – solar heating projects and electrical appliance; Patrick Baah - Dean of Discipline, religion and English instructor.

Br. Daniel Dardo is available as needed as a construction consultant. He is now director of the candidate program at St. Joseph Hall at St. John's School, Sekondi, which greatly curtails his former extensive work in the Skills program. Not a staff member. **Br. Tom Dillman** has revised his textbook, Essentials of Mathematics,

to be used in the Skills program. The textbook had been written for use in an Adult Literacy Program in Liberia at the request of **Sr. Mary Laurene, OSF**, president of the teachers college in Monrovia. It has since been revised and printed here in Ghana and will be used in teaching basic mathematics to the Skills students, most of whom are greatly lacking in math skills.

It may be assumed that in their first meeting relating to the Skills Project neither Br. Raymond nor Fr. Gansah envisaged the splendid facility of the Holy Cross Skills Training Center as it exists today. There is no doubt that our District of West Africa gives a very high priority to this program—more of its members are involved in Skills than in any other active teaching ministry at present in the District! And we accept that the Holy Spirit through the intercession of the Master Carpenter, St. Joseph, has graced a sufficient number of young men to become Brothers of Holy Cross, who have come already prepared in vocational trades, if not actual teaching certificates for this ministry!

Some thought is being given now to a plumbing course, which would appear to be a very viable addition to the program. But the dream continues as may be noted with construction already underway of yet another 3-classroom building. Considerable thought is being given to expanding the program to include girls. Perhaps the new classroom area will see a new computer program and possibly other secretarial skills being taught? Not to overlook a very much desired hope that the opportunity will be present for collaboration with our own Holy Cross Sisters here in Ghana at the Holy Cross Skills Training Center.

FOCUS ON MINISTRIES

In an earlier issue of the District Newsletter attention was given to the respective ministries in which our newly professed Brothers were engaged. Here we spotlight the ministry of our two older temporarily professed Brothers.

Br. Kenneth Kunditani has been a Brother of

Holy Cross for 6 years. He was appointed the new principal of the Holy Cross Skills Vocational Center in January 2002. He completed studies at St. Paul's Technical School in Kukurantumi to attain an advanced carpentry certificate last year. He had certificates in teaching and carpentry, which equipped him to

teach at the Skills Center for several years before going on for further studies.

It is with no small regret to both Ken and those who were under his direction in his former part-time ministry with the youth groups at St. John Baptist Church in Sekondi, that this very meaningful ministry is now precluded by his full-time involvement as principal at the Skills Center.

Br. Emmanuel Mino, who became a professed Brother of Holy Cross in 1996, has generally been involved as a math teacher at the Skills Centre. He is the registrar and also attends to school fees and daily attendance. He had attained his vocational training certificate prior to entering Holy Cross. Emmanuel also is very active in the youth ministry in the parish church in Essikado in Sekondi. Emmanuel meets with the youth twice weekly for purpose of studying the Bible and prayer sharing, these usually preceded by outdoor games such as volley ball and football. At times there is participation with groups from other parishes, in quiz competition,

prayer and retreat programs. In the latter instance these activities are unfortunately less frequent than desired owing to transportation expenses.

Emmanuel has also revived a floundering Legion of Mary group of this same parish at the request of some former members, who had been without a director for several years. The Legionnaires now come together twice weekly to pray and to share their experiences of visiting the sick at home or in hospitals. In these visitations they read the Bible and share in prayer with them.

Br. Emmanuel has been able to distribute rosaries to most everyone in the Legion and in the youth group through the help of **Sr. Marie Carmel, OSC** a Poor Clare Sister in the US. In correspondence with us she had expressed her willingness to make rosaries for our needs here in the District, and now has sent many packages to us. We again express our thanks to Sr. Marie Carmel for her generosity.

EXPANSION OF MOREAU HOUSE COMPLETED

The house now used as the pre-novitiate, which is strikingly set on a very high hill in Butumagyebu just outside Sekondi has a somewhat storied history. When the Takoradi diocese was divided some 30 years ago, Bishop Joseph Amihere Essuah decided to make things ready for the still unnamed prelate by building a house for him on "Roman Hill", where the Moreau pre-novitiate now stands.

Unfortunately, the new bishop felt that the house was too remote from his people, and so selected his own place to live. However, the Holy Cross District of West Africa had decided to establish its own novitiate, the novices up to this time having been sent to the US for this formation. The District acquired this now available property from Bishop Essuah, which would serve as the novitiate under the



direction of **Br. Raymond Papenfuss** for 10 years. A drought in vocations to the Brothers of Holy Cross in Ghana, which had the appearance of continuing, at least into the near future, caused the novitiate doors to be closed.

The vacated house then was leased to a medical doctor as a private residence for several years,

and then to an electronic technician for several additional years. The District next leased the house to a Catholic evangelical organization KNOW AND TELL in 1991. This organization occupied the quarters, relinquishing their lease to Holy Cross, who again had the need of the facility for its formation of young men interested in becoming Brothers of Holy Cross. In 1998, five young men entered Moreau House, as it was then called, to begin their pre-novitiate program under the direction of **Fr. Bob Gilmour**. The space was deemed inadequate in the original structure for all the needs of the pre-novitiate program for this number. At the request of the

District, the Midwest province gave permission to enlarge the facilities with an annex joined to the original house, helped by grants obtained by Br. Raymond. The first floor of the annex was completed to greet the new group of pre-novices, as the first group completed their studies and were approved to enter the Bl. Andre novitiate at the District Center. The second floor of the annex was completed by December 2001. Included in all are essential retaining walls of attractive design, which have been set in the hillside to prevent serious erosion, and landscaping continues enhancing all.

NEW LOOK FOR ST. JOHN'S

A returning visitor to St. John's Secondary School in Sekondi would be surprised, pleasantly so by comments thus far expressed, to see the changes recently made in landscaping. In the area of the quadrangle bounded by the administration building, Brothers' residence and two opposing classroom buildings especially have striking changes occurred. The new headmaster, **Br. Joe Annan**, decided it was time to do something about the previous stand of trees that had grown weary over the many years. This noted by the loss of a former aesthetic shapeliness, along with the many scars from severed limbs and branches by nature's whims more often than by man's pruning aiming toward beautification.

A line of cassia trees have been planted in front the buildings at the outer boundary of the quadrangle. When grown these trees are distinguished by their tall and slender shape with leaves from top to bottom of the trunk. In the inner region, the now young shade trees have replaced the former shaggy ones, though not able as yet to give the desired shade that will take a few years in the doing.

Br. Joe has also been successful through a friend in the forestry ministry to obtain 600 teak seedlings. These are to be planted around the campus boundaries. Br. Joe has been successful in procuring the promise, at least, of prisoners from the local prison to help in the planting of

these trees. The forest ministry will provide more trees if needed.

Plans include, as well, to plant a wide variety of flowers when the rains become more regular—the rains thus far a bit disappointing in the several weeks of this new rainy season.

While immediate evidence of the various changes in the landscape may seem somewhat minimal, there is the realistic expectation of the campus' future enhancement. We perhaps perceive something symbolic in this initial groundwork under the administration of Br. Joe Annan—"the best is yet to come".

It should be noted that this is only area of a number of improvements that has occurred under the direction of Headmaster Br. Joe Annan. There seems to be awareness and appreciation among the faculty and student body, the "old boys" (alumni), even local citizenry that things have significantly improved at the school, since Br. Joe Annan has become Headmaster, returning the administration of the school once again to the Brothers of Holy Cross.

TEAM BUILDING AND GOAL SETTING

The faculty of St. Augustine's College, Cape Coast were invited several weeks ago to attend a special workshop conducted by **Br. Nee Wayoe**,

which his was held at the District Center in Brafu Yaw.

The theme of the workshop was based upon the setting of goals and how to accomplish with all working together toward these, especially regarding responsible attendance to the education of youth under their care. Discussion included such topics as dealing with one's emotions and those of others, anger, coping with stress, etc.

The 23 teachers who were present expressed their very sincere thanks to Br. Nee and to Holy Cross for the opportunity to participate in such a meaningful workshop.

NEW SITE FOR SISTERS OF THE HOLY CROSS

Several years ago the Sisters of the Holy Cross were deliberating on the expansion of their ministry in the area of Kasoa, where they had just established their second house here in Ghana—their other is in Takoradi, some 150 miles away. A plan evolved from this to establish a Holy Cross Center, which would include administrative residence and office, formation house(s), possibly a school and facilities for other ministries. The sisters began their search for suitable, available land near Kasoa. Kasoa is on the highway between Cape Coast and Accra about 20 miles from the latter.

Receiving necessary permission several months ago from their council at St. Mary's, the Sisters began the project with **Sr. Helene Sharpe** in charge. The selected site of some 15 acres is a few miles from the center of town.

The first order of business was to put up a vinyl-coated chain-link fence to encircle the property. A fence is essential for security of the construction work to follow later. It also serves as a deterrent for any squatters seeking to put up some shelter or make a small farm. Newly cleared land is always an attractive place this time of year, especially, for planting corn, which is a staple crop grown here in abundance in Ghana.

There was concern by the fact of the theft at Skills of a section of fence some months ago. There the fence had been fastened to the concrete posts with wire. Unfortunately, thieves came one night to remove a large section of the

fence after cutting the wires holding it to the posts. That section of fence has been replaced, and all fencing is now anchored in concrete, making it much more difficult to cut away the wire of any great length, at least.

Thus, at Kasoa, the workers secured the fence to the concrete post using a different ploy to deter theft. At each post, the fence was covered with a 2-inch layer of cement. One would think this would be sufficient to discourage any theft. Not so—one night, thieves came in to take all of the fence that had been put up earlier in the day. It does take sometime for the cement to attain some measure of its final hardness. The thieves were able to pull the fence away from the posts, as the cement was still soft enough to allow this. Greater vigilance by security personnel has prevented further theft.

Sr. Helene, we are told by fellow members of her community, reports each day to supervise the work. As a word of caution we suggest to Sr. Helene that she takes appropriate safety measures, and will wear a "hardhat" when on the job, especially when heavy construction gets underway!

We pray for God's blessings in this new undertaking of our Sisters of the Holy Cross, and on success in whatever new ministries may be forthcoming at their new Center.

CRITICAL WATER SHORTAGE IN CAPE COAST

The expected rains usually occurring around this time of the year have been somewhat less than normal, such that the reservoir supplying water to Cape Coast and its environs has run completely dry about a month ago. The rainfalls in the city apparently are not reaching the more distant region where the city reservoir is located.

In an effort to alleviate the problem the Cape Coast water department has placed large poly (urethane) tanks at numerous points in the city, which are filled by water tankers every two or three days. A few rainfalls have helped, too, which enable people to collect water that runs off the mostly zinc roofs or down open drains from larger buildings in buckets, head-pans, whatever, even the plastic barrels emptied and cleaned of former contents—salted meat or pig feet. Also in evidence is a number of private

wells being dug in the city, which seem to find water sooner than later at average depths of some 10-ft or so.

The rooftop reservoir for the Brothers' residence at St. Augustine's has been refilled twice, thus far, by a water tanker from the Cape Coast fire service department. In addition, water has been obtained from the very large cistern at the District Center. This cistern is the only present source of water for the Holy Cross community of Brothers, novices, and participants in the Continuing Formation program, some 25 or more persons in all. Rain gutters edge the complete roof area of the original brothers' residence, and the rainwater from these feeds into the cistern (\approx 20,000 US gal). At the current rate of usage, the large concrete-covered cistern provides at least a month's supply for needs, without added rains, even including selected flowers and young plants. Fortunately rains in the area have been sufficient, such that the water level has dropped only about a foot through all this time! **Br. Vincent**, general director of maintenance and manager of provisions at the Center, seems optimistic that this cistern will be sufficient until relief comes with expected rainfall at the remote location of the city reservoir.

BUILDINGS COMPLETED, LANDSCAPING UNDERWAY AT BL. ANDRE NOVITIATE

The work on the Bl. Andre Novitiate building was finished several months ago sufficiently for the move of all from the old novitiate quarters to the new. However, some touch-up work was still being done on the building, as well as to complete the staff house. No one is living as yet in the latter, but the several workers doing yard work at the Center use it as a change-room facility.

On the other hand, the landscaping that needed to be done showed no noticeable progress until the past month or so. One who had not visited the novitiate area within the past month would be amazed to see now the transformation that has taken place in such a brief time. Concrete curbs border the extensive driveway and large parking area. Already a significant part of these areas have been surfaced with inlaid concrete bricks. The same is true of

the long walkway connecting the Brothers' residence and the novitiate. When trees, flowering plants and bushes have been added to complete things, the novitiate should be a beautiful place, indeed.

ST. AUGUSTINE'S HEADMASTER RETIRES

Mr. Jeremiah (Jerry) Koomson, who had been headmaster at St. Augustine's College since 1995, officially retired from this position at the end of the 1st trimester period in March. Mr. Koomson had been associated with the college most of his life, beginning with his years as a student, then returning as a member of the teaching staff not long after getting his bachelor's degree. He completed his studies to attain his doctorate thereafter, gradually working his way up through the ranks into administration and finally as headmaster. He is a close friend of the Brothers of Holy Cross, who now extend to him their warmest wishes along with prayers for God's blessings in his newly found leisure.

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE FOR GHANAIAN WORKERS

Effective May 1, 2002 the minimum **daily** wage in Ghana increased 30% to $\text{¢}7,150$ (cedis). In comparison, two staple foods of the Ghanaian, a 1-lb loaf of bread costs $\text{¢}3,000$, and a 16-oz cup of dry rice costs $\text{¢}2,000$.

The state of Ghana's economy really cannot allow more to be done for its great number of marginalized people, who continue to struggle for their daily subsistence. Ghana is no exception to a past history of exploitation of African countries by foreign enterprises. The *unjust indebtedness* accrued by Ghana and other countries from such exploitation should be cancelled, respectively, by the US and other national powers. We strongly support our international community's CSC Executive Office for Justice, who has prioritised this as its goal.

Editor – Br. Tom Dillman, CSC
Holy Cross District Center, P.O. Box AD 183
Cape Coast, Ghana

Pictures – Fr/ Bob Gilmour, CSC
E-mail: cscghana@africaonline.com.gh