

# HOLY CROSS TODAY - GHANA

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

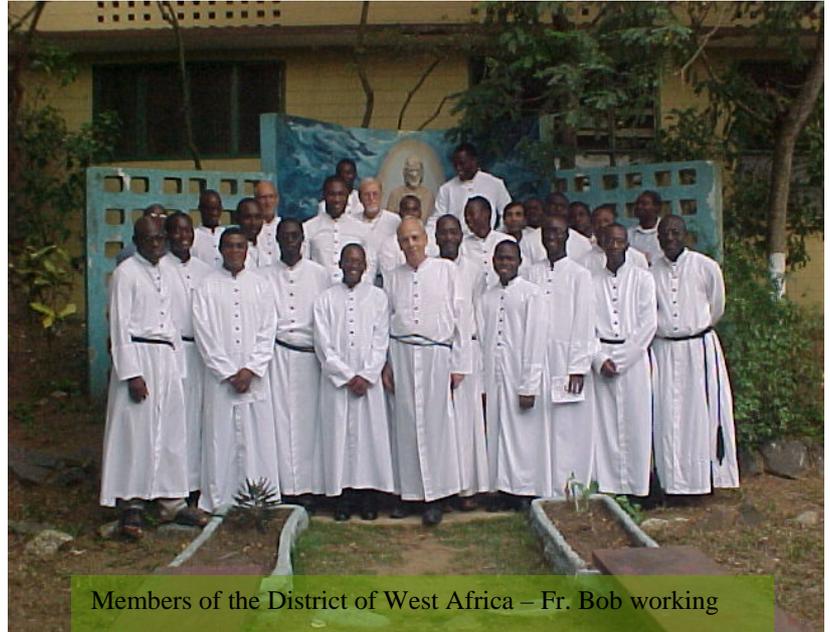
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## SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH – A DOUBLE CELEBRATION

Our celebrations for the feast of St. Joseph began in a most appropriate place—in a carpentry shop. In the carpentry shop of the Holy Cross Vocational Training Institute (Skills Project) students of the programme gathered along with their teachers and members of the Holy Cross Community to celebrate a Eucharist in honor of St. Joseph. Mass was celebrated by **Fr. Augustine Bentil**, the chaplain of St. John's School, Sekondi. All gathered in the carpentry workshop sitting in chairs and using tables all built by the Skills students themselves. The Eucharist, celebrated in honor of the carpenter husband of Mary and father of Jesus, clearly was enhanced in the setting of carpentry tools, tables and students' woodworking projects in various stages of completion. After the Eucharist the Principal, **Br. Daniel Dardoe**, gave the students a holiday in honor of St. Joseph.

Later in the day the members of the District gathered at St. Joseph Hall at St. John's School, Sekondi to celebrate the Patronal Feast and to



Members of the District of West Africa – Fr. Bob working

receive into the Novitiate four Novices: **Stephen Aidoo, Raymond Frimpong, David Kpobi and Stephen Arthur**. The celebration and the reception of the Novices were celebrated in the chapel of the Formation House. **Fr. Bob Gilmour** presided over the Eucharist and reception. The community remembered with gratitude the entire Family of Holy Cross for their support, assistance and their prayers. In a spirit of thanksgiving to them and our Patron, St. Joseph, our voices rang out with joy in songs accompanied by organ, drums and other African musical instruments for all the marvellous things done for us. Truly there was a special joy for the community on this day because of the reception of the four new novices.

Following the Eucharist time was taken for assorted picture taking, most before the large statue of St. Joseph just outside the chapel. Then as our custom has become we left the Chapel and gathered on the lawn under a giant mahogany tree to continue with Feast Day activities. It was a good day. Thank you St. Joseph. ➤(p. 3)



Stephen Aidoo Stephen Arthur David Kpobi Raymond Frimpon

## EDITORIAL: THE CROSS—OUR HOPE

As we approach Passiontide in these remaining days of Lent, perhaps it would be well for us to take time to ponder more deeply our heritage stemming from the significance of our title, Congregation of Holy Cross. Our founder, Venerable Basil Moreau, appropriated the name for his community of religious from its foundation in Sainte-Croix, a commune in Le Mans, France. And thus from the beginning it has been Congregation of Holy Cross—not “the” Holy Cross, the latter implying *the* Cross upon which Jesus was crucified. However, the cross was constantly before the eyes of our founder whose motto for his congregation was “Hail, O Cross, our only hope” (C8: n113). Clearly he expected his followers to strongly identify with the Cross of Jesus in their spiritual development. “Ours must be the same cross and the same hope” (C8: n114). *The cross, which Jesus unconditionally demanded of his followers to take up daily as a mark of discipleship (Lk 9:23), we should embrace most generously by our identification as members of the Congregation of Holy Cross in which we have made our religious consecration to God.*

During the remainder of this Holy Season as we approach the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, let us take time to duly reflect on that aspect of our Holy Cross spirituality which bears on the motto of our founder. Our Constitutions spell out to some length the various aspects of our daily cross-bearing as religious of Holy Cross. We thus unite ourselves more closely with Jesus, who took upon himself the pain and suffering of rejection by those to whom he ministered, culminating in his death on the cross. (See C8: The Cross Our Hope)

This *daily cross*, a necessary prerequisite for discipleship of Jesus, may well be for many of us nothing spectacular, much less bordering on the heroic. But to give full attention to all that comprises our prioritized obligations in each unfolding day can prove to be significantly burdensome—our daily cross. There are the things that we ought to do and in which we find real joy in the doing, but also many instances in which we do not find such pleasure, perhaps causing within us some aspect of *angst* or dread. Yet they are obligations of our ministry or community life that we cannot rationally deny.

Some aspects of cross-bearing that should

be rather obvious if we take time to reflect upon them. Some of the following surface in my own mind as points we might ponder.

Hopefully we do enjoy the company of many persons in our community, as well as others with whom we confer in our ministry. But there probably are others still, whom we would rather avoid with good reason in the *natural* frame of reference, to whom we give token recognition reluctantly, if not ignore completely. Again, we may imprudently overextend ourselves, such as to have no time or energy left, *we feel*, for private or communal prayer. Or we may opt for TV of longer than necessary leisure to a late evening hour as a means to unwind, which may have the effect of *severely limiting* time we ought to take for studies, preparing classes, prayer or other priorities. Taking time for physical exercise and cutting down on the calories, carbohydrates, or whatever, especially where good health suggests the need for our attention to both, surely can be no small cross.

Perhaps these precisely are the crosses which Christ asks us to take up each day and follow him. Our Constitutions state: “Unfair treatment, fatigue, frustration at work, tasks beyond talents,” all form the cross of which we must bear on our way to the Father (C8:n117). Again, in *giving full response without procrastination or regret to the less pleasant situations unfolding each day in our lives*, as we do to the ones affording us joy in the doing, is not easy—it is our cross.

Clearly, there are various degrees of illness, afflictions and disability, of which some at least border on the heroic in the nature of cross-bearing. It is well to recall often the counsel of Peter: “Rejoice in this, that now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Pt 1:6). Let us pray that we may generously, and with a spirit of joy, take up our cross daily to follow Christ. And let us never doubt his willingness to help us in far greater measure than Simeon did for him when the burden seems beyond our endurance to bear. Clearly, the generosity and joy with which we take up our cross each day is the primary means of our growth in union with Christ.

(From p. 1) As the dark of evening descended members expressed a final word of gratitude and began their journeys home. The newly received Novices began their journey to the Blessed

Brother Andre Novitiate at Brafuyaw, 7 km outside Cape Coast, in the Central Region.

—Bob Gilmour csc

## THE WEST AFRICAN DISTRICT NOVITIATE PROGRAM

Continuing our review of formation programs in the District, this issue focuses on the nature of the formation of our novices. The novitiate program offers the candidates the setting to grow in an ever deepening maturity in a holistic fashion with increasing understanding ones own personhood, uniquely created as an image and likeness to the Trinitarian God, and thus come to a better appreciation of divine guidance in their discernment.

*“The novitiate is the beginning of life in the Congregation. Novices are helped to form themselves in meditation and prayer, in the mutual services of a common life, in apostolic service, and in knowledge of the history and spirituality, character and mission of Holy Cross. In short they are challenged and helped to open their hearts to the gospel, to live under the same roof with one another, and to created a brotherhood of disciples. The novitiate is their apprenticeship in celibacy, poverty and obedience. (C 6:62).*

Objectives of the novitiate program are: to help the novice become more aware of how God has already been acting and continues to act in his life; to assist the novice to develop a spiritual and religious life that reflects African Christian and Traditional Spirituality; to offer an introduction into the history and context of the apostolic, liturgical life and spirituality of Holy Cross; to foster a deeper, interiorized meaning of the vows and religious life in today’s world; to offer the novice the opportunity to have a first hand experience and participation in the development of community and apostolic service in Holy Cross.

Some key characteristics of the program will include prayer, spiritual direction, conferences and discussions, along with directed reading. There is also a monthly day of recollection and an 8-day retreat prior to first vows. While living in one community with their director and his assistant, there is the opportunity to attend the daily

celebration of the Eucharist with the professed religious, and other religious in the Continuing Formation program on the District Center compound.

The novices have the experience of living for one month outside the novitiate setting in a Holy Cross community of professed religious. Once a week the novices spend a full day away from the novitiate in an apostolic activity. The latter is not intended as training in ministerial skills, but rather an opportunity to serve the local community surrounding the novitiate.

Once a week there is an unscheduled day provided, in which after morning chores the



Blessed Andre Novitiate

novices are free to use the time in whatever way they wish, either at the novitiate or outside the novitiate proper. This gives them a chance to relax but also to examine their use of free time in light of what they value in religious life.

The novitiate program reaffirms in its financial policy for the novices the community and gospel values of a simple life style and a common purse. At the beginning the novices turn over all personal funds in their possession to the bursar, thereafter living from an approved budget. This allows for the use of certain pocket money available monthly to the novices for their personal needs. Quarterly,

the overall expenses of the novitiate will be shared in discussion at the house chapter along with an ongoing review of the novices' personal expenditure of pocket money. There is concern that spending is limited insofar as reasonably possible while attempting to live within the budget. The need for an extraordinary expenditure will be handled on an individual basis as decided by the novice director and his assistant.

Sunday mornings the novices participate in prayer services either in nearby villages or in some of their apostolic placement locations. They organize and bring the Word of God to those who would not usually have the opportunity to hear it on Sunday. A period of preparation for this service the day before includes a discussion of the themes of the readings of the Sunday.

The novitiate program provides three evaluations spaced over the novitiate year. The first evaluation is a "growth statement" in which the novice evaluates his own novitiate experience, reflects on the programme and sets goals for the remainder of the year. The staff also sits and discusses each novice in light of his written growth statement. They then meet individually with each novice to help them refine and articulate themselves and to better attain their stated goals.

The second evaluation is about 6 months into the program. This is a peer evaluation in which each novice meets with each of the other novices and hears their appraisal of him. He writes up what he has heard from them, and adds his own reflection on their comments. As in the first evaluation he meets with the staff to discuss the peer evaluation.

The final evaluation occurs about 10 months into the program, usually prior to the discernment retreat. Each novice writes up a self-evaluation in relation to his petitioning for first profession of vows. Again the novice meets with the staff with an opportunity to clarify any remarks to avoid misunderstanding. As a sign of agreement the novice and staff sign this document, which is forwarded to the District Superior along with his petition for vows. All these evaluations are included in the novice's file.

In addition to these three evaluations, each month the staff and novice meet for an interview. These give an opportunity for staff and novices to come to know each other better, and to help the novice focus on his life in the novitiate. After the discernment retreat, the novice may make a petition for first vows, according to the Constitutions of the Congregation of Holy Cross.

### FIRST FOUNDERS DAY CELEBRATION AT ST. JOHN'S

On Saturday, February 28, St. John's Secondary School in Takoradi celebrated its first Founders Day since its beginning in 1952. As to which "John" the school owes its allegiance, it would seem that both of biblical's greatest Johns bear some influence. The school motto: *Viam Parens*—"Preparing the Way" relates to John the Baptist, while the beautiful statue of the Evangelist, indicates it is the latter who is acknowledged as its patron saint. The feast day of St. John in the liturgical calendar, however, is not a convenient day for celebration of the event by the student body, and thus Founders Day for the foreseeable future has been set for the last Saturday of February.

The occasion bears closely to that of the Speech and Awards Day, which is widely celebrated in many secondary schools in Ghana. And, in fact,

the celebration this day did unfold much in the same manner as a Speech and Awards Day. The underlying theme for this day was: ST. JOHN'S AFTER 50 YEARS—THE SECOND JOURNEY OF GROWTH. It has been just a little over a year since the Brothers of Holy Cross have reassumed administration of the school, under the capable hands of **Bro. Joe Annan, CSC**. Clearly, there has been a corresponding return to glory of earlier years up to the time when the Brothers relinquished administration in 1979, as alluded to in various speeches during the occasion.

The full day of activities on Saturday culminated with a Eucharistic Thanksgiving Service in the school's Holy Cross Chapel on Sunday morning for which **Bishop John Martin Darko** of the Sekondi-Takoradi Diocese was the main celebrant.

*Today is precious, indeed --the beginning of all the remaining days of your life. Celebrate Life!*

## RENEWAL PROGRAM FOR TEMPORARILY PROFESSED

On Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup> **Brothers Nicholas Arthur, Robert Koomson, Godfred Ashun and Francis Agyevi**, who are in their first year of vows, met with **Bro. Nee Wayoe** at the Bl. Andre Novitiate to take time to reflect on various aspects of their experience in religious life in Holy Cross over the first half year. The theme for the occasion: “What are you Looking For?” served as inspiration on the day’s unfolding discussions, concluding with adoration before the Blessed Sacrament in the evening, at which time each of the four young Brothers laid before God respective intentions for the year.

On Monday, the Feast of Bl. Andre, all members of the District gathered for the celebration of the grand occasion at the Center. The other temporarily professed: **Brothers Emmanuel Mino, Benjamin Biney, Matthew Sabogu, Patrick Baah, Michael Kumi, Ebenezer Prah, Paul Bukari, Kenneth Goode and Vincent Intsiful** joined the other four Brothers at the statue of Bl. Andre for shared prayer and concluding hymn to St. Joseph.

The next day **Brothers William Gates and Kenneth Kunditani** met with all the temporarily professed to further reflect upon the meaning of life in their Holy Cross family, with Bro. Benjamin as the appointed moderator in this. Many expressed the fact that they did not really anticipate the challenges eventually confronting them, but it was realized, too, that these challenges should not be hindrances to spiritual progress, but the means of same, if one remains faithful and sincere in serving God.

Topics were presented by participants, as follows: Brothers Patrick and Matthew – *God’s Call*; Brothers Paul and Kenneth G. – *Mission*; Brothers Ebenezer and Emmanuel – *Prayer*; Brothers Michael and Vincent -- *Brotherhood*.

The sessions were concluded in the evening with the celebration of the Eucharist. On Wednesday all participants went to Anomabu Beach Resort to, as Bro. Robert stated, “enjoy a great moment of togetherness.”

—submitted by Bro. Robert Koomson

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Pictures – Fr. Bob Gilmour, CSC

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## PJC PROJECT COMPLETED

An aspect of the District Justice and Peace commission is its Ministry to the Poor, most significantly manifest in the now completed project to construct a shelter for “Maud”, a displaced and destitute elderly Nigerian woman who is without any material support. On one of his daily walks **Bro. Tom Dillman** first noticed Maud sitting on the edge of a rubbish site. Over the past few years with funds from benefactors, mostly relatives, he has been able to provide some small assistance for food and medicine at times to those who come knocking on the door. To help such as Maud and many others who come for help Tom made a successful appeal for funds to a few parishes in his home town Evansville, IN, whose pastors he knows. Thus it became possible to undertake the project to build the shelter for Maud. There were material expenses only, as labor was done by Tom and an elderly man, who gets help from JPC’s Ministry to the Poor..

The shelter is enclosed on three sides and has a zinc covered roof. Heretofore when it rained Maud would cover herself with a discarded plastic table cloth she had found. She received some protection from a small tree adorned with a variety of cloth/clothes salvaged from the dumpsite to offer some shade from the tropical sun. Several inches of sand cover the dirt floor, and for now a floor-mat upon which to sleep serve as the essential furnishings. Providentially nearby is a public bath house and toilet facilities—a “12-seater”, as a prominent sign at the site proudly boasts!

### ***BITS & PIECES***

- Our seven scholastic brothers attending the University of Cape Coast all received passing marks in every subject for the first grading period.
- **Benjamin Biney, CSC** has moved into an apartment on campus at UCC to enable him to much more conveniently and efficiently cope with his demanding schedule in his last semester of studies. Ben expects to graduate with a bachelor’s degree in Science.
- **Michael Effuah-Kuni** has withdrawn from the District of West Africa. He continues his studies at UCC, living on campus there.