



S.M.A. Vocation Office

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An Experience in Mission by Fr. Julien Esse, S.M.A.



Above: Fr. Julien Esse, S.M.A., teaching catechumens in the village.

I am Fr. Julien Esse, S.M.A., currently a recruiter of people interested in becoming a priest or a priest associate with the Society of African Missions. I have been a priest for 4 years now. Today I can look back and see some of the things that kept me strong in my journey to the priesthood. My *stage* or pastoral year experience was outstanding for me.

I visited Ng'wandoza, Tanzania, (East Africa) as an S.M.A. Seminarian. I was a Theology student at the S.M.A. Formation House in Nairobi, Kenya. In preparation for our future missionary life, the SMA Theology students were sent to Tanzania or Kenya for mission experience and to

deepen in our missionary vocation. During the 2009 Christmas period, two of us were sent to Ng'wandoza parish which is part of the Shinyanga Diocese in Tanzania. Accompanying me was Jaroslaw Porembski, my classmate from Poland. Fr P.J. Kelly, S.M.A., from Galway, Ireland, was the Parish priest overseeing our two weeks program. In this short time, we were able to experience many realities of mission in that part of Tanzania.

Fr. P.J. was open to sharing about his experience and answering our questions. There are more than 30 outstations (villages) which he cares for. We visited some of them, spending the entire day with the people who came for Mass. Normally we left the central Mission before 9 am and returned after 6 pm. On arrival at the outstation, we waited for the people to arrive. The 10 am Mass might not begin until later because the people had other things to do or long distances to travel to reach us. Despite this, they were always present at the Mass.

They entered the Chapel with

big smiles because the priest was present and that they would receive Jesus in the Eucharist. This experience as a student shaped me a lot. Today, as a young missionary, I share with my brothers and sisters how wonderful it is to rely on Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. In the people, I saw a new spirit—the Spirit of the Lord at work. A difference I found from my own country (Togo) was that here in Tanzania you spend an entire day with one group of people. This was new for me. I was used to working in parishes where the priest was visiting more than one outstation per day. I asked Fr. P.J. about this style of mission. For him a missionary should give time to the people. As he put it: a missionary is the one “sitting with people until he gets holes at the back of his trousers.” Indeed, we were sitting for a long time with the people, listening to their concerns. Communication with people was difficult for me because of the language. Children came to greet me in Kiswahili, but I did not

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An Experience in Mission

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know how to answer. Without Kiswahili, very few can communicate with you. This really limited my actions. Even to introduce myself, I had to learn a few Kiswahili words. People were surprised that I could not speak their language.

One day a small boy asked me why Fr. P.J., a white man, could speak Kiswahili and I, an African, could not? Despite this, the people made many efforts to relate to us and help us learn a little of their language. We picked up some words in our interactions with them. Very few spoke English. Their communities were well organized with a large numbers of communicants. They were led by a local catechist in each outstation. The main station had three catechists – one woman and two men.

It was interesting to see some outstations participating actively in the building of their Chapel. Most of the people are farmers. My short visit to Tanzania gave me useful insights into a different way of doing mission. It gave me time to observe, learn, and relax.

Today as an S.M.A. Vocation Director, I share with young people discerning their vocation in life, this beautiful experience I had of mission. I invite them to respond to God's call to preach the Gospel in word and action, in every corner of Africa.

They are needed.



Message from Pope Francis

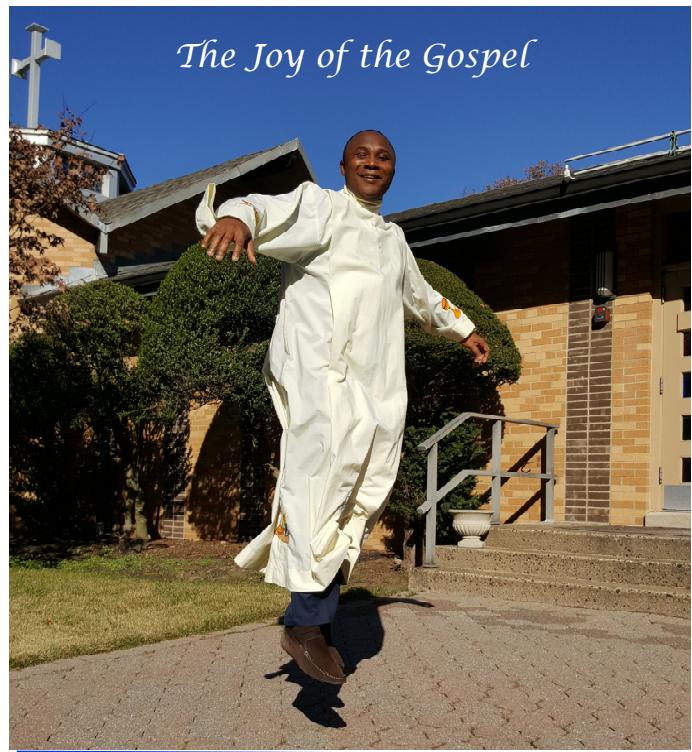
"Jesus is not an isolated missionary, does not want to fulfill His mission alone, but involves His disciples. Not only does He call the twelve

Apostles, he calls seventy-two others and sends them into the villages, two by two, to announce that the Kingdom of God is near. This is very beautiful! Jesus does not want to act alone. He has come to bring to the world the love of God and wants to spread that love with a style of communion and fraternity. For this reason, he forms immediately a community of disciples, which is a missionary community."

He cautions "The purpose is not to socialize, to spend time together. No, the purpose is to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and this is urgent. There is no time to waste in small talk, no need to wait for the consent of all; there is need only of going out and proclaiming."

Taken from Pope Francis' Mission Sunday Homily

The Joy of the Gospel



Welcome Home Joe!



Joe Worthington, S.M.A. Lay

Missionary, has served for six years in the Liberian Refugee Camp in Buduburam, Ghana. He ministered to the children with disabilities in the camp, helping with physiotherapy, a food program, a school for the children with special needs and responded to many other needs as they arose: school fees, scholarships for on-going education, a new prosthetic leg, housing repairs, surgeries—**he was their brother**. The days were long, but Joe says he was very happy in his mission life and his ministries in the camp. S.M.A. welcomed Joe home last week for his well-deserved holidays, re-entry and ongoing discernment.

May God bless and refresh you, Joe, and guide you in your discernment.

Society of African Missions' 161st Anniversary



Msgr. Melchior de Marion Bresillac

December 8, 2017 marks the 161st Anniversary of the **Society of African Missions (S.M.A.)** in Lyon, France, by our Founder **Bishop Melchior de Marion Bresillac**.

What kind of missionaries did our Founder envision? Here is a message he gave to a group of seminarians who were making a Retreat. “*But how mistaken we were if we have the idea that we were going to do marvels and were going to be another St. Thomas or St. Francis Xavier in India! What do you seek? Honors? Then do not come here. Joys of the ministry? Then do not come here. Friendship, gratitude, consolations, a return for all you have done? Then do not come here. However, if, faithful to your vocation, you accept the life of sacrifice and all that that means; if you seek Jesus, Jesus alone, Jesus the poor man, Jesus the humble and the humiliated man, Jesus the crucified man, then come!*”

In the Footsteps of the Founder

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, on June 25, 2009, S.M.A. commemorated the 150th Anniversary of our Founder’s passing. After six weeks in Freetown, Msgr. Melchior de Marion Bresillac succumbed to the ravages of yellow fever.

At that 150th celebration, Bishop Edward Tamba Charles, Bishop of Freetown, asked S.M.A. to return to serve in Sierra Leone. Five years later, an S.M.A. Team was formed and they began their mission in Sierra Leone. Fr. Francis Patrikson, S.M.A. writes: *I reached Sierra Leone by Mid-May 2014. I enjoyed the beauty of the country . . . On April 6, 2014, the threat of Ebola was emerging. By the end of May, cases had been identified. By July and August, the sickness had spread so fast. Fr. Francis and*



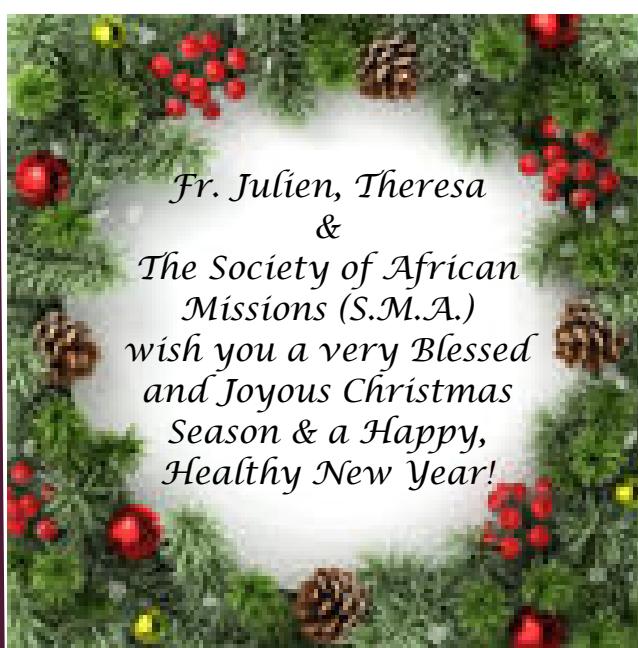
Above: Meet the S.M.A. Team serving in Sierra Leone. (L-R) **Fr. Valery D. Aguh, S.M.A., Fr. David K. Agbevanoo, S.M.A., and Fr. Francis Patrikson, S.M.A.**

Fr. Valery (Fr. David was on furlough) responded wholeheartedly to caring for the people: bringing food to those who were quarantined and carrying patients in their truck to the Ebola Treatment Centers. They knew they were at risk, but continued helping the people as best they could.

They prayed daily, asking the Founder to intercede for them to remain healthy and continue to help the people in their dire need. They truly believe their prayers were answered.

Finally, the Ebola outbreak was controlled and life returned to normal.

The needs were great. There were many orphans who needed a home.



The Fathers found a couple in their Parish to look after the seven orphans who had come to the SMA mission during the outbreak. This past summer 2017, the Fathers came to the US for mission appeals and a much deserved break. They made the needs known and received funds to support the seven orphans for the coming year. By the grace of God, the S.M.A. mission continues in Sierra Leone.