

MISSION REPORT # 8

Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus

Reaching out to the “Poorest of the Poor”

Mouila, Gabon, Africa – Easter, 2015

by Rev. Canon Henry Fragelli

(For any new reader: This *Mission Report* is a letter to my family and friends. So don't be surprised to find it very family-like casual and with little order.)

An apology is what this letter should begin by. An apology for me being so late in writing it. As much as I enjoy putting it together, it is becoming harder and harder to find time for it. “A good sign”, someone could say. But... still! I don't like it. I will try to do better this year. I am well aware that we are missing a lot of donations by this delay. However... the Good Lord gave us Missionaries 24hs per day just as to everyone else, though... twice the work! ☺ But, like I wrote to you last year, this does not mean, in the least, that in my gratitude and prayers I forget any of you for your good friendship, for your prayers, your support and ALL that you do for these poor Children of God in Africa. On the contrary: the less I write, the more I think and pray for you. Now, let me tell you a little bit about what has happened at the Mission these past months:

But first: GRATITUDE. (It is known to be the most seldom of virtues. But not here at the Mission!)

There was a man whose name went down in history with great discreetness and modesty. This man was *Simon of Cyrene*. I am sure however that when he entered Heaven there was a huge party waiting for him. Because in fact, thanks to him, Our Blessed Lord was able to carry his Cross to the summit of Calvary. Those good and holy souls were therefore so proud of *Simon of Cyrene* for having “helped” our Savior accomplish Redemption. Their Redemption!

That same “Cyrenian” pattern will repeat itself throughout the history of Salvation. Yes, by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, but let us not forget... before the Sacrifice, there was a Man who carried a heavy Cross until the place of Sacrifice, and that Man was helped by *Simon of Cyrene*.

To set for us an example, I'm sure, our Divine Savior did not wish to do it totally alone. He was surrounded by the sorrowful affection of His Blessed Mother, consoled by the Daughters of Jerusalem, had his sweaty and bloody face wiped by Veronica, was comforted by the faithful presence of St. John, and... the Cyrenian who shared with Him the weight of the Cross.

And thus will continue to be work of Salvation. There are *Alteri-Christi*, but they cannot do it alone. There are therefore also – I dare to say – *Alteri-Cyrenians*, *Alterae-Daughters of Jerusalem*, *Alteri-St. Johns*, etc., etc. They are all part of God's plan of Salvation.

We are therefore all in this Mission, in this mission of saving souls, together. Our reward will be in Heaven where – I so hope with all my heart – a party of who knows how many African souls will be there waiting for us. Where who knows how many of our African brothers and sisters will sing forever God's praises because you helped carry a bit of the weight of the cross.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you in the name of 29 newly baptized and so many others that today approach Holy Communion because the Mission exists. Without your prayers, your generosity and the affection with which you surround me and the Mission, I'm not sure the Mission would exist. Please stay with us. Like the Cyrenian's, your name may not be mentioned all the time; but we are all walking, together, our own mount Calvary. There are yet hundreds, thousands, of souls to save.

When God closes a door...
He opens a window somewhere else ... or several.
If only we had greater confidence in God's good Providence!
A beautiful lesson of confidence that I will never forget.

A few of month ago, while crossing the African jungle on my way to Libreville on a rainy night, suddenly the front-left tire of the vehicle exploded. Despite my efforts to control the car, it pulled strongly into the opposite lane and... into the jungle it went. On the first moment: what a shock! Hadn't had a single accident in about 30 years of driving. On a second moment... what a relief: I was alive! Pulling the car out of the ditch at midnight, in the middle of the jungle... was an ordeal I will spare the reader. Not that I claim to be right, but the truth is that I was a bit upset at God that night. "We work so hard FOR HIM and..." I thought. Personally, I am not touched by the thought that "God sends trials to those He loves most." My poor experience is that, this beautiful phrase is too often used as a poor excuse for covering up negligence and laziness with a fake hallow of holiness. I could be wrong.



The next day, already in Libreville, still quite frustrated, I went to a store where we have a good friend, *Simon Peter*. Told him about the accident, my frustration, and asked if he could get me a big discount somehow. I needed 4 new tires. (The prices of tires out here are outrageous.) *Simon Peter* told me he could not give me the discount I wanted, less he asked his manager. I waited. Shortly after... the answer came positive. ☺ First window opened.



As I came back to pick up the vehicle with the new tires, *Simon Peter* told me that the manager wanted to talk to me up in his office. "Tell me about your Mission", said the manager. So I

did. "I'm not a believer - he replied - but I do like to help people." Long story short... he gave the Mission a brand new lawnmower, and promised to help the Mission in the future with power tools for the Mission's workshops. ☺ ☺ Second window opened.



Then I headed over to the store where I was going to pick-up a used oven and a used industrial mixer for the Mission's bakery. I told the owner that I no longer had the money to pay him because of all the car expenses. He told me: "Not a problem! We can re-negotiate" And we did. The next day, when I went to pick up the two pieces of equipment for our Mission bakery, the man told me: "Sorry, Father, but I don't have any more the used industrial mixer I promised, but I am going to honor my word and give the Mission a new one" (Which is a difference of about U\$3.000) ☺ ☺ ☺ Third window opened.



Next day, arriving at the Mission, our good Noëline came running out, as she usually does, all in smiles, to see the shopping I had

done for the house at Libreville. I gave her the sad news: that because of all the car fixing expenses, I wasn't able to buy a single thing for the house or the kitchen. Not even the items she has asked for. "How long can we survive with what we have in the pantry and freezer?" I asked her. "A couple of weeks." She answered. "We will have to trust God – I replied – He will provide somehow. He always has." That was on Friday.

The next day, Saturday, as I was giving catechism class to the children, I noticed a French military truck pulling up our driveway. I interrupted the class and went to see what was going on. An officer descended from the vehicle and told me: "Father, we are leaving the area and didn't know what to do with all this extra food. So I thought of bringing it to the Mission." And while we were talking, three other soldiers downloaded a truck-load of food. ☺ ☺ ☺ ☺



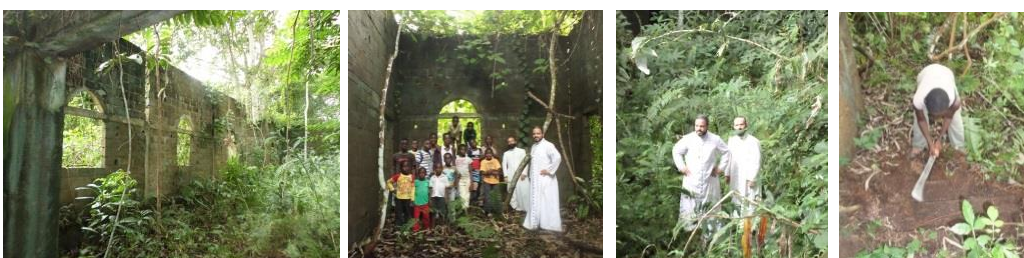
So rather than "God sends trials to those He loves" I personally prefer to believe that "God knows how to play tough love with those that trust Him so little." And yes, I was still upset after it all. In all reason however, and justice, I must say: ***If only we trusted more in God's good Providence, what marvels would we not see?***

EXCITEMENT: If you are looking for excitement like you read in our last letter... don't read this *Mission Report*. It will take you through a perhaps tedious voyage of routine-mission-daily-work. It is now however, as you know, that our love of God is put to test. It is now that our initial "good intentions" are put to trial. So I hope and pray that you will, more than ever before, be in the boat with us on this very testing phase of our missionary journey. Perseverance is the code word.



Even though.... when you bump into a beautiful creature as this one (and African panther and her two cubs), you can't really call it... boring. (Yes, I took this picture with my own camera! ☺)

JUST A CURIOSITY: It was nice to find out that just a few miles from the Mission, lays the ruins of an old Mission and village, founded by Princess Isabella, known and venerated by the Brazilians as the "Redeemer of the Black Race" of the fact that, strong to her Catholic beliefs, she abolished slavery in Brazil. The village is called *Liberty*, and the Mission: *Saint Martin des Apingi*. More surprisingly it was to find out that the restauration of that Mission was *once upon of time* under the care of our Institute. So... you can already see my wheels spinning... I'm starting to dream! What a beautiful thing would be to give back to this Mission its former glory!



Picture on left: 1) The Mission chapel... invaded by the jungle. 2) In the Sacristy. 3) Here, believe it or not, we are in the middle of the aisle. 4) Uncovering the church's entrance steps.

Do you want to try to understand a bit of the Missionary challenge? Read this.

In my poor opinion... THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FOR THE MISSIONARY OUT HERE IS: CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE

As reported in *Mission Report #7*, we had our first Marriage at the Mission (picture on the right) and we said that it was a “*huge victory of grace*”. Why?

Because many local and tribal customs are a huge obstacle to Religious Marriage. Couples that wish to marry must first marry “according to their tradition” (*mariage coutumier*.) The great obstacle is that, basically, the husband has to “purchase” his future wife. The price is set by the bride’s extended family, as they ALL have a share of the money of the “purchase”. (This is their own wording, not mine.)



Long story short... very few can afford it, so most people out here simply don’t marry. And the few that do live a “married life” do not marry in the Church because they can’t afford the “*mariage coutumier*”.

Why don’t they just ignore the “*mariage coutumier*” and marry in the Church? They don’t dare. If they do that, their own family, (or a member of the family,) through the services of witch-doctors, places a curse on them. And they are frightened to death of that happening. These witch-doctors invoke evil spirits upon the couple and “send” their way all kinds of misfortune. Whether we believe it or not... it doesn’t matter. They do! Not to mention the fact that they are completely cut off from the family, who many times even seek physical harm. It is a nasty tribal custom; but very, very strong, and accepted by all.

In preparation for the marriage of Charlin (the Mission’s ground keeper) and his “wife” Raissa, they had to go, recently, through the “*mariage coutumier*”.

Through the generosity of Canon Lefevre, who visited that Mission last August, and who kindly took this couple “under his wing”, we were able to pay the “ransom”. Going back to Italy, Canon Lefevre organized a fundraiser to obtain the means so that Charlin & Raissa can pay their “*mariage coutumier*” and thus have their way clear for the Religious ceremony. The “*mariage coutumier*” was done and now, as soon as we complete their catechism, we will marry them at the Mission. The Marriage Mass and Ceremony is scheduled for October 2015. It will be, God willing, in one of the next Mission Reports.

IT IS NOT SIMPLE

There is much, much more which goes into explaining these deeply rooted African customs. One reason among many is the fact that their concept of family is much “larger” (some call it tribal). A person belongs not to a “family” but to a clan, to a tribe, or an ethnicity.

And here is the problem: Most people, not affording the “*mariage coutumier*”, they simply don’t marry. We have then a society with very, very few families, where great number of the children know only their mother, very often are raised by a grandmother or an aunt, and therefore have very little of a father-like figure, or of a manly role-model in their lives. The consequences of that... you can just imagine.

Checkout the following pictures of their “*mariage coutumier*”:

1. The bride is presented (covered). 2, 3 &4. Than the discussion as to the price begins between the two families. It is not a beautiful scene, and of course, quite humiliating for the poor future wife! 5. Once the price is agreed upon, the husband hands over the money to his future wife, who gives it to her father. She is then handed over to her mother-in-law. She than belongs to her husband.



Corroborating this already weak concept of “family,” is the fact that a couple does not have to give, necessarily, their family name to their children. If I am called Jo Smith, I can give my first child the name Smith, but if I want, my second child I can call Peter Jones, if for example, I wish to honor a friend with that name (Jones). So children of the same family, same couple, have different last names. Genealogy studies are simply impossible here.

From there the custom – which is, by the way, very Gospel-like – of calling everyone “brother” or “sister”. A cousin is not a cousin but a “brother”. All the aunts are called “mom” and anyone who is a closer friend is “my brother” or “my sister”.

To further weaken the Christian concept of “family”, there is polygamy, which is not only legal but very much in use.

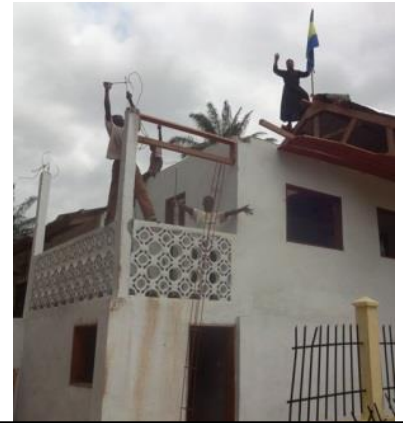
Though quite... strange, for a westerner’s mind-set, these customs are as natural to them as breathing is to us.

Thus the great challenge of the Missionaries. There is no *Christian Civilization* without family. And, in a certain way, we could say: there is no Church without Christian families. And to try to build anything without confronting this fundamental issue, it would be like building on sand, or worse: quick-sand.

Thus, yes, to have had a first marriage on our second year here... IS a “huge miracle of grace”. We can say Holy Mass every day for them; we can baptize and confirm by the hundreds; but the real proof of God’s blessing in Missionary land is, ultimately, in my opinion, proved by the number of truly Catholic Religious Marriages.

To close this chapter, I ask for your prayers. Yes, every marriage is a “victory”, but no true victory goes without much *sweat, blood, toil and tears, AND PRAYERS*. No true supernatural victory is obtained if not *watered* by prayer. Here once again: an invitation for being a “*Missionary from afar.*” You can! You will be happy to know, that by God’s grace, we have already two Marriages scheduled for 2015, perhaps a third.

GRATITUDE... once again! To the generous donors that came to the Mission's rescue so promptly.



We had JUST finished the new house. Inauguration was scheduled for February.

But... the Good Lord had other plans. And... on my birthday! What a gift!

But, as you know, we are not the sit-down-and-cry type. Rebuilding started next day.



Three weeks later...

Oh, I forgot to mention...

We are enjoying the good company of **Matthew Serafino** (my Godson, btw) who came to volunteer at the Mission for two full months. Among other skills he is an electrician. He did all the electrical in the new house; then the electricity wiring and connection for the bakery's "new" oven; now he is working on all the cabling of the new Parish Hall. Former head of the Altar Boys in Saint Louis he has also helped with the liturgy and Altar Boy training; and as former director of the Institute's choir in Chicago he is training our Choir for all that is Gregorian Chant. And those are only... his "official functions". He has helped so much in so many other things. Most importantly it is a joy to have his good company at the Mission.





TWO NEW GROUPS:

Two new youth groups were formed at the Mission.
The:
Âmes Vaillantes (Brave Souls) for the young ladies.
and:
Coeur Vaillants (Brave Hearts) for the young men.
(This last one is basically the group of altar boy.)



On top: the two “Coat of Arms” that each group chose for themselves.
The green, yellow and blue are the colors of Gabon. The rest is self-explanatory.

Besides Formation Meetings, Catechism and participating in the many Mission activities, each group has a **monthly outing**. This last time we went exploring the ruins of an ancient Mission. Poor children... they were bit by all kinds of bugs and wild ants. (Me too! ☺)



RETREAT and Meetings for the COMPANIONS OF SAINT JOSEPH

The “Men’s Group” is now beginning to help in some Mission activities. We preached two retreats for them in 2014: one in Libreville and the other in Mouila. The men’s activities are very often and... succesfully “fulfilled” by a good meal and a good *Regabe* (Gabonese beer.) ☺
This group greatly owes its existence to Colonel MASSE (far right on picture 1). God bless him!



INVESTING IN VOCATIONS

A bit early in the letter but... **it is a priority: Our First Donation Request.**

As you know, last year we sent Martha-Therese to Germany to spend two month (the summer) with our Sisters Adorers. It was a wonderful experience for both, the Sisters and for Martha (Pict. 1). In fact, Martha returned completely changed. And she went right to work, that is: the apostolate with the other young ladies of the Mission. (On Pict. # 2, Martha-Thérèse with newly baptized Fatima and Lucie.

Having obtained permission from my Superiors to expand this program, we are hoping to send, this summer, four of the “best” young ladies from the



“Âmes Vaillantes” to visit with our Sisters Adorers. (Picture above)



But we CANNOT do it without sponsors. Please consider investing in one of these beautiful vocations.

VISITING WITH OUR COMMUNITY IN LIBREVILLE.

It is always a blessing to be able to be (once a month) with our Confreres in Libreville.



One of the recent marvels of this trip is contemplating the recently finished façade of our church in Libreville, all made with authentic Portuguese “azuleijos” (painted tiles)



40 HOUR ADORATION

One of the highlights of the Mission's weekly program is Thursday's weekly Adoration. One of the most blessed moments of the Mission's Year Calendar is the **40 Hour Adoration**. We look forward to it. And it is no longer a problem finding adorers, even for late night hours.



THANK YOU... again!!!



A huge thank you for the family that generously offered the Mission this beautiful Sanctuary Lamp. It will remain there, burning 24/7, as a constant prayer to Our Sacramental Lord, on behalf of this good family. Not a bad deal, to donate a Sanctuary Lamp! And... Canon Fragelli can now sleep with no worries of the chapel burning down.



Pictures: Blessing and inauguration of the new Sanctuary Lamp.

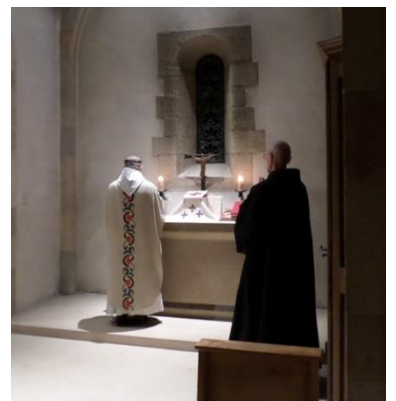


YEARLY RETREAT

Our yearly priestly retreat was only two days after the Institute's yearly pilgrimage to Lisieux, so... God was good and I was able to go visit our Little/Great Patron Saint. Going to Lisieux is always also a "business trip". Lots of bargaining with the *Little Flower*.



Then... off we went to the magnificent Benedictine Abbey of Le Barroux for a 5-day retreat.



Few things are more "delicious" than to celebrate Holy Mass, alone, in the silence of a crypt in a monastery. Just you and HIM!

ALL SOULS DAY

On All Soul's day we literally go... "grave hunting". Funerals and everything surrounding death is VERY solemn in Africa. But once the body is taken to the cemetery... it is abandoned. There is the fearful belief that if one goes there that the person's spirit might come back. Besides, people can be buried basically anywhere. Most commonly along the roads, on the edge of the woods, or if you have the means... in your own back yard. (Pictures)



ELECTRICAL CODES

Matthew Serafino, our electrician volunteer, was very shocked to see the lack of electrical code in construction. Basically... inside one's home or store one does whatever one wants. It is scary!



These are stores where we used to buy beautiful African fabrics and materials for the Mission's sewing workshop.

Recently, a good friend of the Mission lost three of his little children to a fire like this one. It was tragic. And... there is no fire department; no fire fighters. You are on your own. Insurance? You've got to be kidding! It is total lost! However, one beautiful thing: after disasters like these, which occur more often than not, their extended-family concept of life serves as a strong supporting group. "*We are together*", is their most common saying. **Anyway... it all adds to the... colorful adventure that is being a Missionary in Africa! ☺**

ALTAR BOYS

Altar Boy training is constant at the Mission. Besides learning how to serve in the Church's liturgy, they learn the most important thing one can give a child, after God's grace: DISCIPLINE.



And... it is never too early! Even the little ones get it. And... they love it!



Of course... at the end of every practice they are rewarded. We go out for ice cream! ☺
The outcome of this effort is quite rewarding. The Catholic liturgy, little by little, engraves in their young souls more good than any speech could say.

NASTY CREATURES - THE BEST PROTECTION

There are certain things one cannot avoid being in Africa. It all adds to the adventure. This snake was waiting for me on my office steps as I came to work in the morning. The second one Chardin caught at the carpentry. (Observe how the children are not scared by it.) The third one was victim of gluttony, trying to eat a lizard a bit too big for its mouth. And... don't get bit by these giant wild ants. It hurts for days!



However... through the generosity of some very thoughtful souls we are well



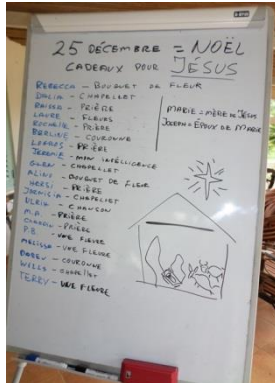
protected. A statue of St. Patrick on my night table and a large poster of the Irish saint presides the Mission. Since I have been here, NOT ONCE any of us has been bit. Even when a poisonous snake wrapped around one of our employee's leg... it did NOT bite him.



Thank you Saint Patrick!

CATECHISM CLASSES

The greatest blessing is the growing number of children that come to Catechism every week. We have now, in the different classes, over **75 children** and 20 adults.



GRATITUDE once again.

Our hearts pour out in gratitude do our dear Carmelite Sisters of Coimbra, Portugal, who sent us the most beautiful statue of Our Lady of Fatima. God bless their good hearts.



THE CHOIR

Anyone who has sung in a choir knows how meritorious it is to come every week for two, three hour practices. But, thanks to these generous souls our Masses and liturgy are each day more beautiful, attracting more and more souls to God.



Feast of the IMMACULATE CONCEPTION of the BLESSED MOTHER

To celebrate our main Feast Day we had the joy of the visit of some of our Confreres from Libreville. A few members of the St. Benedict Choir, from Libreville also came to give us a hand.



As on the previous August 15th, feast of the Blessed Mother's Assumption, we conferred the **Miraculous Medal** to another 120 faithful. Not being able to give everyone the Sacraments right away, no better way to protect them than to place them under the protection of Our Heavenly Mother.



Then... a joyful celebration.



CINEMA at the MISSION

Cinema at the Mission is one more means of attracting souls to the Mission... to God. **WE URGENTLY NEED PLEASE:** More good movies (in French). For children or for adults. Religious or not. As long as they are of good taste and clean. God reward you!





CHRISTMAS 2014



Midnight Mass, celebrated by Canon Tequi, who was here at the time, was followed by our traditional joyful sparkling wine (that here passes for champagne ☺) celebration.



Still keeping with tradition: Major Igoungou does the toast. And we don't forget to celebrate Noeline's birthday, born on Christmas day.



CHRISTMAS DAY... the long expected Baptism of the 9 oldest catechumens, who have been faithfully coming to Catechism, every Saturday, for the past two years.

But before... a rigorous exam. Don't the children look frightened? ☺



Baptizing is always one of the most rewarding aspects of Missionary life. A goal achieved! A new beginning.



Next: **FIRST COMMUNIONS**

Then the **newly baptized Altar Boys** receive the Altar Boy Crosses engraved with the arms of the Institute. →



← Last but not least, each Baptism is carefully jotted down in the Baptismal Registry, and a “Catholic ID” (Little green booklet) is issued for each newly baptized.

Then... the Christmas Celebration. Each Child of Catechism, young or adult, got a Christmas Gift. The others... just watched. Mysteriously... Catechism attendance doubled after Christmas ☺



Little Emmanuel doesn't come to Catechism yet but... he is Father's Godson!



We were very much honored this Christmas by the presence of our new Governor and his Wife.



FRIENDS and PUBLIC RELATIONS



Msgr. Jean, Episcopal Delegate

Fr. Jean invited to preach.



Fr. Serge, new Priest in town

Directors of local Business



With our dear Trinitarian Sisters

Lunch with S. Kisito's new Pastor

With our new Governor

And... got to meet the President!

MISSION STORE and CANON'S OFFICE

Since my arrival to Mouila we have been dreaming of opening a store at the Mission to help our faithful so that they don't have to walk a mile to buy a can of sardines. Of course, always with the hope of attracting more and more souls to the Mission. Also, with the growing number of faithful, the need for an office to receive them became pressing. So... it finally happened! And both, store and office have been attracting new people. We were privileged to have here, for **INAUGURATION DAY**

- **Monsignor Michael Schmitz**, to cut the ribbon to the new office space and bless it.
- **Governor Benjamin NZIGOU**, to inaugurate our new flag pole.
- **Mayor Madame Isabel MBOUMBA**, to cut the ribbon of the new Mission Store.



As Monsignor likes to say:
"Our Priestly hands are made for chalices and calasses."

Blessing and raising of the Flag

Tying the rope to the top of the flag pole...? Not a problem! These African kids climb trees (and poles) as fast as we blink an eye.



← Office ribbon cutting and unveiling of Institute's coat of arms, by Mgr. Schmitz



Blessing of the Office and Mission Store by Mgr. Schmitz



Followed, as always, a little reception. We had then the occasion of offering our new Governor and Mayor little gifts... from my country: Brazil.



↑ Then we enjoyed some quiet time with Mgr. Schmitz during his short 20hour visit to Mouila.

CHANGES at the MISSION

With the opening of the Mission Store, Noeline (besides her functions of cook, cleaning and laundry lady, was “promoted” to Mission Administrator. She oversees the three ladies that daily work at the bakery making fresh bread, cookies and cakes. She also does the stock control.



Since it is tailored to our very poor community, we make no profit at this store; we break-even. But we are happy to provide a service to our community, and a job for 5 of them. Not to mention all the new people that it has attracted

to the Mission. At the store we also sell the items made by the young ladies at the sewing workshop. Again, our Governor was one of our first customers.



A little treat for our Volunteers

So far we have always been able to offer our volunteers, as a thank you gesture, a little treat. It is also a brake for me. ☺ Why not a nice walk through the African jungle? Though from a far, this time we did get to see 13 elephants. And huge 6-foot-long lizards (picture below.)



If you are ever thirsty in the middle of the African jungle... just cut a branch of the “Water Plant” →



Elephant and Panther’s foot prints. Quite impressive!



↑ Swimming in the South Atlantic for the first time! ☺
And any time is good for reciting your Breviary; even during boat rides.→

THROWING LARGE THE NET FOR SAVING SOULS

The Mission has now it's own Soccer Team. The...

Panthers of Christ the King

As you might know, the black panther is the nation's symbol. So.... *Panthers of Christ the King*. They are a total of 55 young men, divided into two teams: Little League and "The" Team.

"The Team" practices 3 times per week; the Little League once a week.

On May 10th we will have our first match against the *Saint Kisito Soccer Team*. (Another team in town.)

Please pray for this new endeavour. That it may bring even more souls to God. The main requisit for being a part of the *Panthers of Christ the King* is coming to Catechism every Saturday. It is going well so far.

And obviously... we need help getting them uniforms, training equipment, etc.



And if you want to sign-up... we've got a portable table.

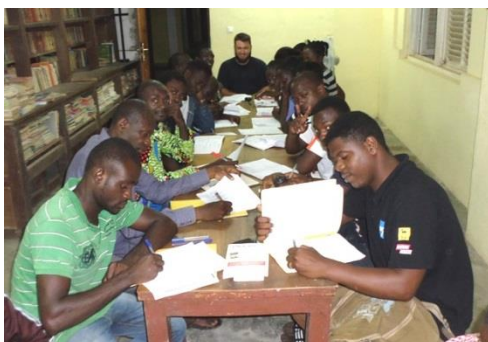


Practice 3 times a week, sunshine or rain.



ENGLISH CLASSES

"Advanced English Classes" has attracted some very good souls to the Mission. And... of a higher cultural level.



LAST GOODBYE TO A DEAR FRIEND OF THE MISSION, Prof. KONOU

Since day one of my arrival in Mouila, Mr. Konou, a Latin Teacher at the neighboring *Val Marie High School*, was my greatest moral support. Though always in great pain because of his sickness, he was always smiling and joyful. His death was a great surprise and a bigger loss yet. May his souls rest in peace.



Funerals are a pretty solemn thing in Gabon. All these people were up ALL night long



mourning. But... our Altar Boys really like this part. Processing through the streets of Mouila, in their blue cassocks, on the back of the pick-up.

OUR DEAR TRINITARIAN SISTERS

As mentioned in previous Mission Reports, our closest neighbors are the *Trinitarian Sisters*. Sister Therese-Marie (the “Little-Sister”) is a most joyful, pious, hard-working Sister. Every so very often, during her Rosary walk, she comes over to the Mission and we have and ALWAYS very interesting conversation. She has such fantastic stories to tell. In the following pictures we are celebrating her 50 years of Religious Profession.



Pictures: 3 & 4: In a very African-like way, very appropriate and joyfully, the Sisters come dancing and singing into the celebration, one of them balancing the cake on the top of her head. **Picture 5:** Mother Superior, from Lyon, France, came for the celebration.

NEVER MENTIONED BEFORE

I believe we have not mentioned in the previous *Mission Reports*, but we have EVERY SUNDAY, after Mass, what would be the equivalent of “coffee & doughnuts in the basement”. We have no doughnuts and no basement but... It is a moment of bonding of our little African Mission Family. All provided by our little Mission Bakery.



A couple of ODD & ENDS

This is a typical pharmacy out here. Don't expect much, but... they do have the basics. For anything more, one has to go to Libreville.



One day, Mr. & Mrs. Mouiti, whose marriage I celebrated last year, asked me for my mother's maiden name. What for? I asked. Because they wanted to give their newborn that name. What is most curious, however: not as a first name, but as a last name. This is one of the many local customs that weaken the idea of a family. A child will not always have his parent's last name, but the last name of someone they want to honor. Of course I insisted that the baby carry also her parent's name. So, on December 28th, the little girl was baptized under the name of:

Sara Azevedo Mouiti



The Gabonese, in general, is very open to what they call the « Mystic » realities. You will then find "Mystic Trees", "Mystic rocks", "Mystic lakes", etc. This one here, next to the city of Fougamou, is the "Mystic Mountain". I must confess... even before I knew of its given name, I used to call it "Gabon's Mount Sinai" because of the cloud formations that surround it constantly giving it an always mysterious look. The local believe is that the mountain and its forests are impenetrable.



HOLY WEEK

Our first Holy Week, naturally, was reduced and simplified. But little by little, as the faithful get to know and appreciate the Church's sacred liturgy and our altar boys learn and train more, we "expand". Every year therefore we add a little more. This year, thanks to the help of Matthew Serafino, we were able to do a lot more. (Pictures: Palm Sunday procession and Easter Vigil)



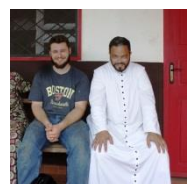
Followed, of course, by the children's "Egg hunt" and our joyful Easter Lunch



SO MUCH TO THANK FOR!



Last but not least: my gratitude to all those *Good Samaritans*, that have helped me recover my health. After 6 crisis of malaria my health was getting weaker and weaker by the day, making me already think of the possible need of me leaving the Mission. But, with great and carrying generosity these *Good Samaritans* came to my aid providing the best medical care. Thanks to them I am in very good shape today.



Matthew Serafino was great company especially when waiting for long hours in hospital lines.

CARE PACKAGES



Care Packages, have been an important part of this Mission's history. Being out here in the African jungle and receiving a package from someone that cares has an effect on the moral like words cannot describe. Not to mention that EVERYTHING they contain goes to very good use. I pray that God will one day reward these good and generous souls in a way proportional to the good that they do, though perhaps not fully knowing.

WHAT TO SEND? I suggest that, at each time, you send me and email and ask, because the needs change all the time.

There are a few things that you can always send:

- Religious articles. Crucifixes, religious statues, medals, rosaries, etc.
- Ink for our printer: Inkjet Canon 35 and Inkjet Canon 36. And Inkjet 440 & 441. We can always use those.
- Clothes for all ages. Just remember that here there is no winter. So: no winter clothes. (These clothes are not distributed indiscriminately, rather to the "family of the Mission" as to help them create a greater "family bond" with the Mission.)
- Toys for the children. Ideally NOT very sophisticated ones or electronic.
- Then... just anything your heart wishes to offer the Mission... will go to good use, you can be assured. I am at times surprised to see how things I had never thought of, end up being so useful at the Mission.

We are so very thankful to Col. MASSE and his Family who so generously received the Mission's packages for us at their Libreville address. With their departure, we are seeking other means for you to send the Mission your packages. So, if you wish to send the Mission a package, please contact me by email and I will give you the most updated shipping instruction.

Shipping Address?
Please contact me for the most current shipping instructions.
fragellihenrique@hotmail.com

PLEASE DO NOT SHIP ANY PACKAGE TO THE Col. MASSE ANYMORE.

The Mission **CANNOT EXIST** without your generous help.

Yes, I want to invest in future Religious Vocations in Africa. I wish to pay for the trip of one, or two, or all four of the Mission's young ladies candidates to spend some time, this summer, with our Sisters Adorer's in Germany. The cost of each is U\$1.900, which includes: Airfare, Passport, Visa and insurance.



Yes, I want to be a fan of the Panthers of Christ the King by becoming a monthly donor of the Mission to support this new Apostolate.

Yes, I wish to become a Monthly Donor of the Mission. (The Mission can't exist and grow without donors that will generously commit on a regular basis so that the Mission's apostolate can have continuity. We are ALL called to be Missionaries. I know it is a sacrifice. I wouldn't be asking if I didn't know what sacrifice is. Please consider becoming:

Dollar-a-Day – St. Therese's little way: a little sacrifice each day.	\$30 / month
Mission Supporter – There is not glory without sacrifice.	\$100 / month
Mission Builder – We will only take to Heaven that which we give away.	\$250 / month
Missionary from afar – True giving is self-giving.	\$500 / month

I pray that God and Our Blessed Mother will reward your generosity. Hope to hear from you soon.

BENEFITS?

Please join me in believing that our reward will be in Heaven and Heaven only. And I truly HOPE this is true. If it were not for this hope, believe me, I don't think I'd be here any longer. And don't forget the: *"Whatever you do to the littlest of these... you do it to ME"*

BUT...

You can also be assured of our prayers. Mission Donors, and their families, are remembered daily in the intention of Holy Mass at the Mission, in the intentions of weekly Adoration and daily Rosary.

On a more earthly concern... you will receive, for tax purposes, a yearly receipt for the total of the donations that you gave the Mission during that fiscal year. That is: if you send your donation according to the following instructions:

HOW TO DONATE TO THE MISSION? It is safe and simple:

Step 1

- a. Go to www.institute-christ-king.org.
- b. Click on *Shrine of Christ the King*. (First on the list of Apostolates)
- c. Click on *Donate*. (Tab on a red colored row on the top of the page)
- d. Click on *African Missions*, (forth from the bottom up) and follow the prompts for donating. You can make a one-time donation or set up for a recurring donation. (Note that there is no *"Mouila Mission"*. Reason for "Step 2")
- e. Do NOT try to *"Create a Profile"*. It can mess up things.

Step 2

- a. Send an email to our secretary, Mrs. Mary Hall, at info@institute-christ-king.org to let her know that you wish your donation to be sent to the *Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus*, in Mouila, Africa. Or if you wish, to make it clearer: "for Fr. Fragelli's Mission". *
- b. IMPORTANT: Copy that email to me at fragellihenrique@hotmail.com so that I can follow up on it every month.

* You will get a yearly tax-deductible receipt for your donation.

* If you wish you can contact Mrs. Mary Hall at: (773) 363-7409 ext. 3.

* You can also send a donation to the Mission by sending a check to our headquarters in Chicago. Make sure you send it *"care of Mrs. Hall"* and that you indicate that your donation is for *Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus*, in Mouila, Africa.

Please consider joining me in this Mission through your generous monthly donation. Don't miss this chance of "being a Missionary" too.

And please be assured of my prayers and immense gratitude. Being out here is quite a challenge. Having you "on board" means a lot to me. I remember all of the Mission donors and their families in the intentions of my daily Holy Mass.

May God bless you and Our Lady be always in your good hearts.

Rev. Canon H. Fragelli

PS. Please consider reaching out to the "Poorest of the poor". It will be your way o thanking God for all the blessings He sheds upon you every day. Thank you.