

RELAF

**LASALLIAN
REGION OF
AFRICA AND
MADAGASCAR**

“A Region still under construction...”



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“A REGION STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION...”

LASALLIAN REGION OF AFRICA AND MADAGASCAR

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AT THE SERVICE OF UNITY AND SOLIDARITY

INTRODUCTION

The pastoral visit of the Superior General, Brother Robert Schieler, assisted by the General Councilors, was a sign of closeness to our Region as part of his mission, shared with the Council, at the service of unity and solidarity throughout the entire Lasallian Family.

It gives further witness to the Institute's solicitude, through its central government, towards our Region of Africa and Madagascar. In fact, Saint John Baptist de La Salle comes to mind whenever Brother Superior is present as his 27th successor. Founded in France in the context of the 17th century, the Institute was somehow founded again in the different countries of Africa and Madagascar. Pastoral visits are precisely an opportunity for Brother Superior and his Council to witness the heritage that so many missionary Brothers "without borders" have left us. Likewise, it helps them realize the vitality of the Lasallian educational mission in our five Districts and one Delegation today.

In RELAF we are presently undergoing and dealing with an important turning – point in the history of our Lasallian educational mission. We are called – Brothers and Lasallian Partners together – to deepen our shared responsibility. How else will we be able to measure up to the heritage left by the "first missionaries", who were pioneers of the Lasallian educational mission in our different Districts and Delegation? In addition, we ourselves, in turn, are called to become missionaries beyond the borders of our home countries, surpassing our institutional and personal limits.

BEGINNINGS OF THE LASALLIAN MISSION IN RELAF¹

*“If we do not remember where we have been,
we will not know where we are going”.*

Before speaking about the Lasallian Educational mission in our Region, a word of acknowledgement must go to our pioneers, some of whom could be presented as saints. A number of them silently died as true martyrs. Let us simply indicate some dates regarding these remarkable pioneers, founders of the Lasallian mission in the different countries that RELAF comprises today. On September 24, 1866, three French Brothers opened one of the first Lasallian centres of RELAF in Antananarivo. The first Malgache to join them, Brother Louis Rafiringa, took the religious habit on March the 1st, 1878, and received the name of Brother Raphael-Louis. He was declared Blessed by Pope Benedict XVI in 2009.

Five Irish Brothers left London on September 23, 1904, and arrived at King

William’s Town – which was then part of the British Cape Colony – to open a school. On October 7, 1909, five Belgian Brothers docked in Boma, Belgian Congo. The Belgian Brothers arrived in Congo in 1909, while the Italian Brothers came to Asmara, Eritrea, in 1936. The Belgian Brothers founded the Teachers College of Byumba, Rwanda, in 1953. Then the Congo-Rwanda District was erected in 1960, and Rwanda eventually became an autonomous Delegation in 1972.

On September 25, 1948, five French Brothers arrived in Toussiana, Upper Volta, now Burkina Faso. That same year, five Brothers from Quebec arrived in Cameroon. In April 1957, the Dutch Brothers also came to Cameroon to train rural teachers in the town of Doumé. The Society of African Missions based in Lyon (SMA

¹ Cf. Fr Alban, F.S.C. Histoire de l’Institut des Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes. Expansion hors de France 1700-1966. Editions Générales FSC. 1970.

Fathers) asked the Brothers of the Christian Schools to take over Saint Augustine's Teachers Training College in Togoville; four Canadian Brothers, led by a French Director, did so on September 19, 1952. The SMA Fathers also entrusted their Teachers Training College of Akuré, Nigeria, to a group of Canadian Brothers from Toronto in 1956.

In 1953, several French Brothers who were based in Djibouti arrived in Ethiopia to take charge of a school in Dire Dawa. In 1954, the Canadian Brothers from Montreal took over Steinmetz Teachers College, which trained Christian teachers for the entire country of Dahomey, later called Benin.

In 1958, the Ethiopian government introduced English as the main language of

instruction instead of French. Therefore, two American Brothers arrived in Addis Ababa in 1959, and five others in 1960. Regarding Kenya, four American Brothers from the New York District, who arrived in Mombasa on November 24, 1958, took charge of the Teachers' College in Nyeri the following year.

In 1958, the Brothers of Spain were called to Spanish Guinea (now Equatorial Guinea) to take charge of a school for young orphans and children of lepers in Bata. The inauguration took place on February 15, 1959.

Only two Districts of our Region have celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the Brothers' arrival: Antananarivo (150 years) and Congo-Kinshasa (100 years).





THE LASALLIAN EDUCATIONAL MISSION IN RELAF TODAY

Brief history of the regional structure

The Lasallian Region of Africa and Madagascar draws vitality from the calls of the Institute, and from the ongoing effort to implement a regional structure that can facilitate the attainment of its goals. The Institute aims at strengthening its presence in Africa through collaboration between Districts, the Delegation and the Sectors.

The setting up of Regions in the Institute was inspired by the General Chapter of 1966. Then the Chapter of 1976 motivated our countries to set up the Lasallian Region of Africa. This venture began in July 1977 with the 1st Statutory Assembly held in Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso): all the existing Institute sectors in Africa at that time became one Region. This Assembly marked the official birth of the Region², and the setting up of common bodies and authorities – Regional Assembly, Conference of Visitors, and a part-

time Brother Regional Coordinator. In preparation to this, there had been Pan-African meetings in Yaoundé (1972) and Kinshasa (1974). The texts the Statutory Assembly approved and the services it established were clear, but implementing them in the concrete life of the Region was a different matter. This process faced the normal difficulties of any new enterprise.

The 2nd Assembly, held in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1988, broke new ground by establishing that Brother Regional Coordinator would work full-time. This change responded to the needs of the Region, which had evolved since 1977. Common services had become important – novitiates, regional scholasticates, and the CLAF programme (final vows preparation). Brother Regional Coordinator was to lead these activities as their first animator.



² Cf. Address of Br Dominique Samne, General Councillor, to participants in the 3rd Assembly, December 23, 1995.



In an ongoing effort to better achieve its goals, RELAF met again from January 4 to 6, 1996, in Nairobi, Kenya. This 3rd Assembly revised the statutes, the role of the Regional Coordinator, and assessed the different common services. It mainly aimed at offering clear guidelines for the Brothers' mission in Africa, and at defining clearer statutes allowing regional structures to operate effectively, responding to the real needs of the Region. Significant progress was made in this Assembly. It should be mentioned that the structuring process of the Region went through two different stages: 1977-1988 and 1988-1996.

The 44th General Chapter in 2007 redefined the Regional Coordinator's role. Since then, some General Councilors – besides working as a team with Brother Superior General – oversee one of the Regions. In RELAF, this new situation led to the establishment of a regional team, which initially comprised the Regional Councilor and his secretary. They were based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, in a formation house with the third-year scholastics, where they shared the responsibility of running the community. This arrangement lasted until October 2011, given that proposition 4.1 of the 5th Regional Assembly – held from January 8 to 13, 2010 – recommended the appointment of three brothers to work together with the Regional Councilor, establishing therefore a regional team of four members. This solution aimed at effectively meeting the coordination and communication needs concerning formation, animation and management at the regional level. The new team was set up in November 2011. They moved to the Good Shepherd Community until April 2012, and in May that same year, they moved again to the Cocody neighbourhood in Abidjan. RELAF therefore never stopped evolving as it tried to be faithful to the calls coming from the Institute, and to the requirements of the mission and its unity.

To date, five Brothers from the Region have served as General Councilors: Brother Dominique Samné, whose mandate began in 1993, left us on August 5, 1997; Brother Yemanu Jehar, General Councilor from 2000 to 2007, died on March 26, 2012; Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly, current vice-Postulator for the cause of Blessed Louis Rafiringa, served two terms (1976-1983 and 1993-2000); and Brother Gabriel Somé, whose mandate went from 2007 to 2014, is currently the high-school coordinator at Toussiana School (Burkina Faso). Brother Pierre Ouattara was elected in 2014 and his mandate is still running.

Economic context of the Lasallian Educational Mission

For once, some good news about our economy. *Africa's Pulse*³ states that there will still be contrasts regarding the economic performance of our countries in 2017. However, while the economic growth of the largest economies in the region, plus the countries exporting raw materials, will register a small increase, the rest of Africa will progress at a sustained rate as exchange rates progressively stabilize, thanks largely to investment in infrastructure.

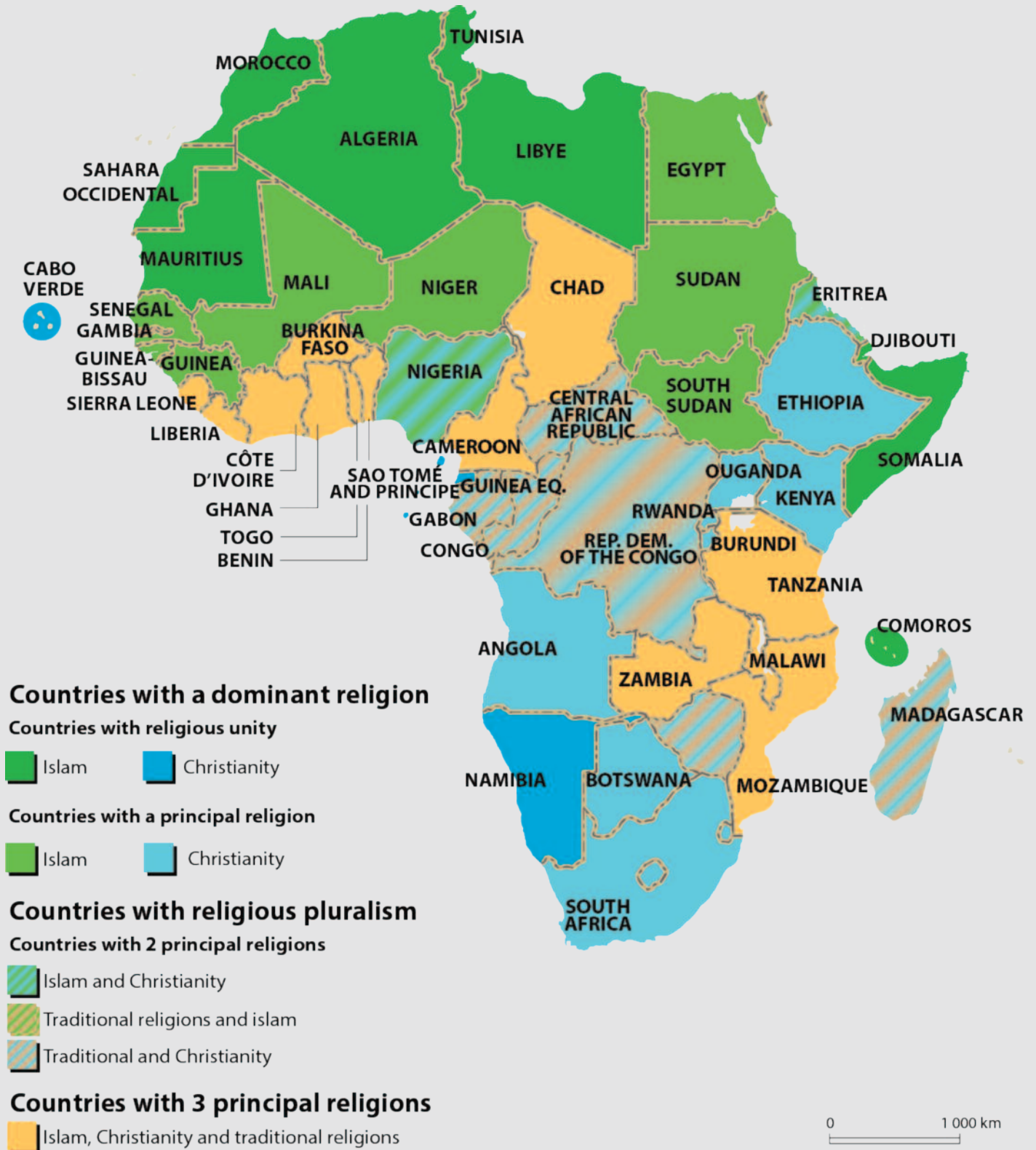
The World Bank in the last issue of *Africa's Pulse* indicates that Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania should undergo a 7% growth at least between 2015 and 2017. This growth rate is due, among other reasons, to the investment in energy production, transportation, the export sector, and to a domestic consumption increase. "Several countries of sub-Saharan Africa continue to show a robust economic growth despite the marked drop the region has recorded due to a less favourable economic environment, they state.

"Poverty reduction has been faster than expected in sub-Saharan Africa – according to *Africa's Pulse* – and the prevalence of poverty in the continent has dropped from 56% in 1990 to 43% in 2012". As a result, "the African population's life conditions have improved, particularly regarding the areas of health care (maternal and infant mortality) and elementary education, in which gender-based inequalities have been significantly reduced", as stated by the ECOFIN agency. However, the high birth-rates during that same period in Africa have limited the impact of the strong economic growth we have enjoyed in the last two decades. Africa still has challenges to face to keep pace with other world regions regarding the *Millennium Development Objectives* (MDO). In other words, we are still far from reaching the development goals for Africa.

³ Half-yearly publication of the World Bank Group that analyses the continent's economic perspectives.

A context of cultural and religious pluralism

Coexistence among religions



Challenges and educational missions in the RELAF context



A piece of good news for our Region is that our population is convinced, for the most part, of the important benefits that school education generates for society. It has become evident to all that schooling is strictly necessary. By the same token, people are putting pressure on our States to open more schools, and to implement a better adapted and more productive school system. They clearly expect that education takes on four important missions to meet the challenges of our countries: build unity and peace, eradicate poverty, promote lasting human development, and promote human rights in general, particularly the rights of women, children, girls and the family.

Region RELAF





SCHEDULE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL'S PASTORAL VISIT TO THE REGION

OUI, DE SA PLÉNITUDE NOUS AVONS
TOUS REÇU ET GRACE POUR GRACE
Jn. 1-16



...prièrent le 18 Avril 1861,
les BORGHERO & FERNANDEZ
...re de la Bonne Nouvelle

ALORS LA GLOIRE DE YAHVE
SE REVELERA ET TOUTE CHAIR D'UN
COUP LE VERRA CAR LA BOUCHE DE
YHVE A PARLE. Isaïe 40-3,5

Les trois premières Sœurs ADA arrivées
au DAHOMEY en Août 1877
- Soeur Menique
- Soeur Cyprien
- Soeur Dominique



1. Visit calendar

The Superior General's visit went from October 18, 2016, to May 3, 2017. Throughout his travels, Brother Robert Schieler could touch – and was touched by – many aspects of the educational mission that Lasallian Brothers and Partners are carrying out together in RELAF.

Together with Brother Pierre Ouattara, Regional Councilor, Brother Superior spent time in the Delegation of Rwanda (October 18 to 24), the Districts of Central Africa (October 25 to November 7) and Antananarivo (November 9 to 18), and the Sector of South Africa, which is part of the Lwanga District (January 22 to 25, 2017).

After a pause of about a month dedicated to the General Council's 8th plenary session, he resumed his pastoral visit with the Sector of Mozambique (March 11 to 13), which still belongs to the District of Brazil-Chile. He then went on visiting the Sectors of Kenya (March 13 to 18) and Ethiopia (March from 18 to 25) in the Lwanga District, but was unable to visit the Sectors of Eritrea and Nigeria due to visa issues. He concluded his visit with the Districts of the Gulf of Benin (April 25 to 4) and West Africa (April 4 to 11).

To close the pastoral visit, Brother Superior gathered all members of the General Council and the Regional Conference of Brother Visitors in Saint Miguel Scholasticate, Abidjan, from April 18 to 20. The visit to the Congo-Kinshasa District, initially scheduled for December 2016, was delayed due to an uncertain political situation, and finally took place from April 22 to May 3, 2017.

2. Chronicle of the visit

The Brothers are present in 20 countries of the African continent, some of which are not attached to the Lasallian Region of Africa and Madagascar: Egypt (Middle East District); Mozambique (Brazil-Chile District); and South Sudan, where the Brothers work as members of an NGO called *Solidarity with South Sudan*.

The countries of RELAF are grouped into six Districts and one Delegation. The following section mentions some of the activities, celebrations and meetings that took place during Brother Superior's visit.

District of Central Africa

It comprises Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, whose capital, Yaoundé, is home to the District House.

Sector of Equatorial Guinea

A meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2016, with students and teachers of La Salle Lia, in the city of Bata, Equatorial Guinea, opened the visit to the District of Central Africa. At noon the same day, we paid a courtesy visit to Monsignor Juan Matogo Oyana, Claretian, Bishop of the Diocese of Bata. Brother Superior General then visited the Diocesan School for Catechists in Bata, which is efficiently directed by Brother Manuel Carreira, assisted by a team of formators. This school also provides teaching materials for the human and catechetical formation of the parents serving as catechist in the different parishes of Bata. This centre operates as a boarding school, and emphasizes cleanliness and order in a special way.

The Superior General then went to the *La Salle Professional Training Centre* of Bumodi in Bata. This centre for 120 professional learners has a primary school, including a kindergarten, with 307 students.

Primary students presented a beautiful song and dance show carried out with order and discipline. Then a girl said a well-articulated word of welcome in Spanish to Brother Superior and awed the public despite her young age. Another little girl performed the raising of the flag while all her classmates sang the national anthem with much conviction. Brother Superior and the school Director then visited each classroom to spend some time with the children. The joy of being visited by an important personality could be read on their faces.

This was followed by a visit to the electricity workshops, management and administration classrooms, and computer rooms while they were being used by the students. These programmes do not entitle students to receive a specific diploma, but are much appreciated nevertheless. The carpentry section, however, had to be closed due to the low number of applications.

When they met with the Superior General, the students said they would like to receive an official diploma after completing these programmes. Given the economic crisis the country is going through, it is not easy to find a job in the business field, and they could not afford expensive courses which do not deliver value for money.

Sector of Cameroon

Cameroon was the second destination of the Superior General's pastoral visit to the District of Central Africa. The inauguration of *De la Salle Higher Institute* in Douala was a highlight of this visit. It was also an opportunity for Brother Superior to meet with Quentin Tago, Coordinator of the Lasallian Volunteers in Mbalmayo, and two other members of this service programme. The Lasallian Volunteers are running a high school with 280 students, the best in the Nyong-et-So'o Department. This school offers 10 full scholarships, and financial assistance to 30 students who are in the category of "social cases". The volunteers also run a vocational formation centre. Four volunteers are permanently living in the Brothers' community, and ten others come when they have activities in the school.

The Inauguration Mass of the new *De la Salle Higher Institute* was presided over by the cathedral parish priest, and attended by many academic, administrative and traditional authorities. The Mass was held in the gym of *De la Salle College*. It was followed by Professor Thomas Atenga's inaugural lecture entitled "Emergence and development. What is at stake for Africa?" Immediately after the Mass, *Veritas Catholic Television* interviewed Brother Superior and posed several questions: "What are the reasons for your visit? Your thoughts about the Lasallian works in Cameroon? A brief description of Lasallian works worldwide? What would your final message be?" In

conclusion, Brother Superior insisted on the fact that young people (70% of the African population) are the greatest wealth of any society, and therefore they should be entitled to the best possible education.

On October 30, Brother Superior General met with the Brothers who were present in Douala, and delivered a lively message of



encouragement, which began with a text from Saint Paul: “You were to put aside your old self, which belongs to your old way of life and is corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind was to be renewed in spirit so that you could put on the New Man that has been created on God’s principles, in the uprightness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4: 22-24). He pointed out that we are especially dedicated to the mission, but we must not have a reduced vision of the mission. We are more than the mission, and thus we also need to include the dimensions of consecration and community in our spiritual life.

At eleven o’clock on Tuesday, November 1st, we hit the 275-kilometre road that goes from Yaoundé to Lomié. We arrived there after traveling more than six hours. Even though it was drizzling, and night was falling, a group of children wearing their school uniforms were waiting for us as the “reception honour guard”. Clapping and singing, they gave a cheering welcome to Brother Superior. Then a group of boys and girls danced with bells on their feet to the mesmerizing rhythm of a drum. Brother Superior warmly greeted the children before being driven into a traditional Baka hut, where he was invited to sit for a few minutes. To honor Brother Superior – and since they had just celebrated All Souls’ Day – the Baka people, pejoratively called Pygmies, put on a brief show in which a dancer, disguised as a strange creature, performed a funerary dance.

The Brothers’ community in Lomié, especially Brother Ghislain, runs a boarding home that hosts 29 boys ranging from 9 to 22 years of age. The main purpose of this centre is to introduce children to the values of family life, and expand their horizons by allowing them to experience a lifestyle that is different from what they lived in their villages.

Sector of Chad

On Friday, November 4, Brother Marc Ndouba Mbairessem – Brother Visitor’s delegate in Chad – welcomed the Superior General at N’Djamena Airport. The three Brothers from the community of *Saint Joseph Technical and Industrial High School (LETI)*, located 345 km away in the city of Kelo, had joined the four Brothers from the community of *De la Salle Technical Apprenticeship and Upskilling Centre N’Djamena (CTAP)* on the rare occasion of Brother Superior General’s arrival.

For almost a month, Chad had been paralysed by a strike in several work areas, especially health and education. At five in the afternoon on Saturday, November 5, Brother Superior and all the Brothers paid a courtesy visit to Monsignor Edmond Djitangar, new Archbishop of N’Djamena, former Bishop of Sarr, who belongs to Brother Anatole Diretenadji’s family. The Archbishop emphasized the Brothers’ important mission of witnessing to the possibility of fraternal life among people from different cultures and nationalities in a predominantly Muslim environment. He also praised the quality of the technical and professional training that CTAP is offering, the only one of its kind in Chad.

N’Djamena, from what we saw, is a beautiful Sahelian city with spacious and well-laid-out avenues and boulevards. Nation Square in the city centre, with its gardens and playgrounds, is a large open space with pleasant relaxation areas, walks and leisure activities. Beautiful buildings arise here and there in the city, although some of them have been left unfinished because of the economic crisis that hit the country after the fall in oil prices.

Brother Superior’s pastoral visit to the Central District of Africa ended on Monday, November 7, at the CTAP in

N'Djamena, an institution belonging to the Catholic Church and founded in 1991. It helps young people and adults to find a job by training them in the areas of car mechanics, electrical cooling, plumbing and sanitation, metal and wood construction, welding, electronic and computer maintenance. There is an initial formation stage lasting two years. This centre is attached to the Public Service and Employment Ministry. In addition to the morning programs, there is a nine-month

course in the afternoon for young people who do not study in the centre. In the 2016-2017 school year, the CTAP trained 190 first-year apprentices, including 6 girls, and 139 second-year apprentices, including 5 girls. Students are supervised by 16 trainers, and an administrative staff of 6 people. Among the students there are Protestants (46.50%), Catholics (36.17%), Muslims (13.67%), and members of other traditions (3.64%).

District of West Africa

Brother Superior's visit to the West Africa District went from April 4 to 10, and concerned mainly four places in Burkina Faso: Ouagadougou, Bobo-Dioulasso, Beregadougou and Banfora. Upon arrival on April 4, Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, Archbishop of Ouagadougou, received Brother Superior in audience at 5:30 p.m. Parents and alumni greatly contributed to welcome the Superior General and assure him a pleasant stay. In fact, the alumni got the government to grant a special recognition to the Superior General on behalf of the Brothers. On April 5, in the presence of the La Salle educational community and some members of the parents and alumni associations, he was awarded a recognition for the Brothers' educational work. During this same event, several present and former students said they would like to have a Lasallian University in Burkina Faso. One of the former students, as a sign of gratitude for the education he received from primary school up to university, offered 17 hectares of land for a possible University campus in the locality where he is the Customary Chief.

During his visit to Bobo-Dioulasso, Brother Robert was received by Archbishop Paul Ouédraogo. He also visited a recently-opened school in Kiri, an outlying district of

Bobo-Dioulasso. As a sign of solidarity during the Lenten season, Brother Robert made a major donation of money and supplies to a nursery home that accommodates abandoned children, and congratulated the Sisters of the Annunciation who run the centre. Brother Superior also had a lively meeting with our Brothers at the Interfraternal Novitiate Our Lady of Grace, and held an interesting discussion with them.

Brother Superior's visit to Banfora revolved around the perpetual profession of Brother Pierre Aymard Bako on Saturday, April 8, which was presided over by the Bishop Emeritus of Diébougou. The perpetual profession ritual began with a dialogue between the Superior General and Brother Pierre Bako's family, highlighting the link between our spiritual and human families. On the way back from Banfora to Bobo-Dioulasso that same day, Brother Superior inaugurated the main hall of the *Lasallian Centre for Training in Agricultural Skills (CLIMA)* in Beregadougou. He dedicated the hall to late Brother Pedro Arrambide, who contributed to the completion of many projects in the African continent while he oversaw the *Secretariat for Solidarity and Development - SECOLI*.

District of Antananarivo

Brother Superior arrived at Ivato Airport in Antananarivo on Tuesday, November 8. He took active part in the annual Brother Visitors' Conference of RELAF, which lasted three days. Holding the Conference on this historic hill called Soavimbahoaka (Blessed by the People) was a grace of Divine Providence. It used to be the King's cattle farm before Blessed Louis Rafiringa bought it around 1890. Three other Brothers also participated in this Conference: Gustavo Ramirez, General Councilor in charge of Higher Education and the *Secretariat for Association and Mission*; Amilcare Boccuccia, coordinator of the *Secretariat for Solidarity and Development*; and Ambrose Payne, Bursar General of the Institute.

Brother Superior's pastoral visit coincided with the anniversary of the Brothers' arrival in Madagascar: 150 years of educational service to the poor. In fact, the Visitors' Conference took place in the "Big Island" this year as an expression of solidarity with the District of Antananarivo. In his closing message to the Conference, Brother Superior General highlighted that, more than ever, there is a need for cooperation between the four major Lasallian networks: Brothers, alumni, Signum Fidei and Lasallian universities. At the end of the Conference, there was also a word of thanks to Brother Michel Tolojanahary for his service as Regional Secretary during the last five years.

Several groups belonging to the Lasallian Family in Madagascar met with Brother Superior on Saturday, November 12, at 3:00 in the afternoon. More than eight groups were represented: Guadalupana Sisters, Signum Fidei, Alumni Association, Lasallian Orators, Young Academics Dolphins of Blessed Louis Rafiringa, Brother Rafiringa Choir, Anna High School, Anosibe Social

Centre, Info Centre, Antsa Faravohitra Choir and Workshop Centre from Mahamasina.

The 150th anniversary of the Brothers' presence in Madagascar reached its highpoint with the Eucharistic celebration on Sunday, November 13, which lasted three hours. It took place in Blessed Louis Rafiringa's sanctuary on Soavimbahoaka Hill. Brother Vincent Rabemahafaly introduced this significant celebration with an hour-long lecture – which began in Malagasy, went on in French, and concluded in English – summarizing 150 years of history in the District. The Celebration was presided over by Monsignor Odon Razanakolona, Archbishop of Antananarivo. It was concelebrated by Monsignor Fidelis Rakotonarivo, Bishop of Ambositra, and a group of diocesan and religious priests. Other participants included representatives of the Government; around 82 congregations of women and 32 of men that are working in Madagascar; delegations from the various schools of the Brothers and Sisters; Lasallian Family Associations; relatives, friends and alumni. Brother Superior spoke about Blessed Louis Rafiringa after the thanksgiving Mass, while Brother Michel Tolojanahary translated for him into Malagasy. He stated that Blessed Rafiringa's fidelity to the Church and service to the poor and to society are an example and a challenge for each of us today.

At the end of the Mass, Brother Superior, accompanied by the Visitors, was honoured with a presentation of photos comprising three parts, one for each 50-year period. He had the joy of meeting the parents of Brother Mamy Rabarone, Visitor of the Antananarivo District. Brother Superior thanked and congratulated them for the gift of their son to the Institute and the Church.

The midday meal on this historic day brought together around 300 guests. A group of waitresses looked after them offering food and drinks. They were supported by the *Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle*, wearing serving dresses for the occasion. The waiting service was remarkable. Several choirs and even a group of Brothers provided musical entertainment. Finally, the guests gave in to the music and started dancing. The ice was broken by Bishop Odon and Sister Virginia, Delegate of the *Guadalupana Sisters* in Madagascar. Brother Superior and the Visitors also joined the circle dancing.

On Monday, November 14, Brother Superior General went to *Stella Maris Private High School* in Toamasina, preceded by a procession of policemen and students on motorcycles, which caused a sensation across the city. This school has 3,000 students and 150 teachers, and achieves the best results in the national official examinations practically every year. A few hundred meters before the entrance to the property, the procession stopped to unveil a column bearing the name of Brother Marcel, one of the first builders of *Stella Maris*. On the entrance gate to the school there is a sign with the famous La Salle logo, the well-known motto of “Faith – Fraternity – Service”, and a phrase in Malagasy written down below: “Tsy mizy mafy tsy laitry ny zoto” (courage overcomes every obstacle).

The first three French Brothers arrived in Toamasina – the country’s largest port – on their way to Antananarivo in 1866, but *Stella Maris Private High School* was founded only in 1962. Since then, many Brothers and lay teachers have given themselves, body and soul, to children and young people in this school. The 150th anniversary of the Brothers’ arrival was an opportunity for *Stella Maris* to honour its educators. The Great Chancellor,

Monsignor Désiré Tsarahazana, Archbishop of Toamasina, awarded 19 Medals of Merit, and 5 Officer Medals to *Stella Maris* teachers. After the Mass, Brother Superior General, Brother Visitor and the Archbishop inaugurated a set of paintings on the school fence wall. And finally, the Archbishop blessed a new statue of Our Lady of the Star.

The next day, Wednesday, November 16, was basically dedicated to spending time with children. After a brief farewell visit to the Archbishop, Brother Superior went to *Saint Joseph’s School* next to the Archbishop’s residence. The second oldest in the District, this school is 147 years old and belongs to the Brothers. The next stop was *Our Lady of Lourdes School*, ran by five *Guadalupana Sisters*, who inherited the school from the Brothers. It now has 21 teachers and 800 students from kindergarten to primary school. Some children were waiting for us aligned at the entrance as an honour guard, and gave us an enthusiastic welcome. They brilliantly sang the chorus and first verse of a hymn to Saint John Baptist de La Salle. The Director, Sister Vivianica, introduced the visitors, and then gave us an outline of the school’s programme. She mentioned that there is a close collaboration with the Brothers, given that *Stella Maris* enrolls the students who graduate from *Lourdes*.

Thursday, November 17, was the last day of the visit, and included several stops. *Saint Joseph Private High School* in the district of Andohalo (Antananarivo), was the first Lasallian school where Blessed Louis Rafiringa lived and worked. Presently, it has only 170 students, and the numbers keep dropping. Brother Robert Schieler, Superior General, unveiled a plaque commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Brothers’ arrival. In this place, which has great historical importance, Brother Superior urged the students, teachers and alumni to live up to

the values they have received from their school, which has formed illustrious personalities, such as Archbishop Jerome Rakotomalala, the first Malagasy bishop and cardinal.

At 10:30, Brother Superior went to the *Social Centre for the Advancement of Women* located in the poor and insalubrious district of Anosibe (Antananarivo). The Centre belongs to Signum Fidei. Mr. Philippe coordinates the 15 Signum Fidei members of the city, and Brother Melkiade is their advisor. The Social Centre's training programme takes three years. The first-year group includes 47 girls and 3 boys; the second year, 19 girls and a boy; and the third, 15 girls. After passing a formal examination

at the end of third year, they get an official diploma. In addition to human and religious formation, the programme includes several practical courses: embroidery and sewing, knitting, hairdressing, childcare, cooking and computing. The Centre also offers literacy lessons.

Then Brother Superior visited *Anna High School* – which is right next to the *Social Centre for the Advancement of Women* – to offer his support and encouragement. This private school belongs to Mrs. Anne-Marie, a former Signum Fidei member. She has kept the Lasallian spirit, belongs to the Lasallian Educational Mission Team, and is in close collaboration with the District.

Charles Lwanga District



Sector of South Africa

On Saturday, January 21, Brother Superior General began his visit to the oldest Lasallian Sector in the continent – South Africa, where the Brothers arrived in 1904. Together with Brother Thomas Sheehy, Sector Coordinator, and the educational teams of *De La Salle Holy Cross College* and *De La Salle Junior School Discovery*, Brother Superior visited the *Tsholofelo Community* (Community of Hope) in the town of Phokeng. It is a diocesan-right religious community of men and women that was founded in 1992 by Brother Joseph (FSC) and Sister Georgina (SMMP), under the auspices of the Bishop of Rustenburg. Currently there is a Brother in perpetual vows and another in

temporary vows in the community, who also take a vow of association with the diocese. The community has four aspirants, and offers health and educational services in two nurseries and a clinic. It also runs training programs for young people and adults living in very poor informal settlement areas.

On Sunday, January 22, Brother Superior visited several landmarks in Johannesburg, beginning with the *Cathedral of Christ The King*, which has organised an important refugee service mainly aimed at immigrants from Zimbabwe and Congo-Kinshasa. Then we went to the historic township of Soweto (SOuth WEst TOWnship), cradle of the high school students' uprising against the Government's decision to

impose the learning of Afrikaans. The peaceful demonstration of June 16, 1976, was met with fierce police repression and hundreds of students were killed. This event triggered a civil war that eventually led to a democratic South Africa. We spent some time in meditation and reflection at *Regina Mundi* – a large Catholic church located in the heart of this historic area – where there is now a museum commemorating these tragic events in the history of South Africa. And how could we leave Soweto without visiting Nelson Mandela’s home? It is not far from the house where Archbishop Desmond Tutu and his family lived. Our visit was a full-immersion experience in this historic township, which has become an important tourist attraction.

On Monday, January 23, we visited *La Salle College Discovery* in Johannesburg. It was founded in 1966. Besides the traditional “Pro Deo et Patria” (For God and Country), a second motto is written at the school entrance: “Enter to grow and leave to serve”. The school has 318 students from elementary to high school, with different ethnic backgrounds, as it usually happens in South Africa. There are three retired Brothers – Thomas, Cornelius and Timothy – who live inside the school. Part of the Brothers’ residence was transferred to the college administration. Due to their age, the Brothers are not actively teaching. The Director, Mrs. J. Milne, runs the college with a staff of lay people, mostly women. In addition to English, students that are interested can learn Zulu and Afrikaans.

On Tuesday, January 24, the Superior General visited *De La Salle Holy Cross College* in Victory Park, a suburb of Johannesburg. This institution opened in 1986 out of the willingness of the Holy Cross Sisters (and thus its name) founded by Mother Bernarda Heimgartner, and the

Brothers of the Christian Schools, who wanted to carry out a common educational work. It currently has 900 students and a teaching staff of more than 100 people. There is a wonderful church in the middle of its vast and beautiful campus. Mary Hyam, the Junior-School Director, walked us around the centre, which goes from first grade – for ages 5 and 6 – to seventh grade. It has a music room equipped with various instruments, and a computer networking room for the students.

Then we visited *De La Salle Holy Cross High School*, which goes from grades 8 to 12. In the last year of high school, students must pass the “senior certificate examination”, popularly known as “the matric exam” – ‘matric’ as in ‘matriculation’ – which opens the doors to University. The visit was conducted by the Principal, D.J. Harris. Brother Superior had the opportunity to meet with the *Young Lasallians Committee* and their advisor, Liane Stonier, who is a very committed teacher. There is a community of Brothers in this school – Albert, Patrick and Laurens. Brother Patrick – the youngest in the community, and presently the only South African – is the vocations director. In the afternoon, we met with a group of people who were interested in the *Lasallian Association of South Africa (LASA)*. This meeting made us hope that several collaborators, men and women, will soon commit themselves to the Lasallian Educational Mission as lay partners. An Executive Committee already in place will ensure the implementation of a training course for them based on an already-existing program. On Wednesday, January 25, the last day of Brother Superior’s visit to South Africa, he had an early-morning interview with *Radio Veritas*, a Catholic radio station.

Sector of Kenya

The visit to this sector began on March 14 at *Saint Mary's Boys Secondary School* located in the town of Nyeri – a diocesan institution directed by the Brothers, which has a high demand for enrollment. The *Child Rescue Centre*, a boarding school for children who are at risk and lack family support, operates within Saint Mary's.

Then we visited *Saint La Salle Secondary School* in the village of Karameno. This institution has greatly improved in the last three years. It is now in full operation, with more than a hundred boarders, girls and boys. There is electricity and running water. Teachers are housed on-site. The school is presently needing more classrooms, given the rapidly increasing number of students. This is the first centre owned by the Brothers, and offers good prospects for the Kenya sector. In his address to the students and teachers, Brother Superior pointed out their role as pioneers in the history of this new and beautiful work.

To conclude the day, Brother Superior inaugurated the new postulancy house in Karameno at the invitation of Brother Collins, the Postulancy Director. Fully furnished and functional, the house has a vegetable garden in the backyard, where the postulants grow carrots, cabbages, and tomatoes.

On Wednesday, March 15, we visited the two Lasallian centres of Nakuru. *Mwangaza College* is a diocesan skill-development institute with 27 teachers and 400 students. It offers different training programmes: accounting, computing, secretarial studies, catering, sewing and hairdressing. At the end of their training, students, who are mostly girls, find a job rather easily, and therefore people really appreciate this institution.



The *Child Discovery Centre* has been headed by Brother Paul Anderson for the last four years, with the help of three dedicated lay people: Martin, Susan and Jane. Children discover here a place for trauma healing and personal transformation. They attend nearby schools, and some go to *Mwangaza College*. The Centre basically serves total or partial orphans, and abused children. Some of them ran away from their families, and lived on the streets without anyone to care for them. The Centre has training courses on cooking and farming. It is partially self-financed thanks to different animal husbandry and vegetable



growing activities. It also receives support locally and from twin schools in the United States. The Centre is planning on undertaking several income-generating activities and, in the long term, aims to establish a foundation. Brother Superior was invited to plant a memorial tree in the yard.

On Saturday, March 18, we celebrated the perpetual profession of Brothers Boniface Wachira, from Kenya, and Weldetsion Ukubatnsae, from Eritrea. The Eucharist was presided over by Monsignor David Kamau, Auxiliary Bishop of Nairobi, concelebrated by several priests, and

attended by the Kenya Sector communities, the Sector Coordinators of the District, and the Brothers' parents – including Brother Weldet's mother, who came from Eritrea especially for the occasion. The scholastics, novices, students and teachers of our school in Nairobi, as well as many women and men Religious and friends of the Brothers, prepared and participated in the celebration, which took place at the new playing fields shared by the scholasticate and the school. A large marquee was installed for the celebration, and two small ones for an aperitif after the Mass. Brother Francis Njoroge, master of ceremonies, made the participants laugh time and again. Some primary-school students were also present throughout the celebration, and danced during the entrance procession, the procession of the Word, the offertory, and the final thanksgiving. A particularly intense moment was the solemn invocation of the saints while both Brothers prostrated themselves before the altar.

Sector of Ethiopia

On Sunday the 19th and Monday the 20th of March, we visited *Bisrate Gabriel School* and the Brothers' community in the city of Dire Dawa. There are only three Brothers in this school, which was founded in 1953 and has 2037 students. The name 'Bisrate Gabriel' means 'Gabriel's Announcement' in Amharic. While visiting the school, somebody asked Brother Superior about the importance of Lasallian formation for lay associates, and he pointed out that learning how to handle a classroom, teach a lesson, and prepare an exam would be the first step. After this practical initiation, we can talk about the Lasallian philosophy, pedagogy, and spirituality lying behind it.

We were impressed by the *MC House of Dire Dawa*, a home for mentally disabled people run by the Sisters of Charity



of Mother Teresa. Brother Samson and some alumni teach there every Saturday. According to the Sisters, the young people from their centre look forward to these courses. There are only four religious congregations in Dire Dawa: the Sisters of Mother Teresa (who run 18 centres in Ethiopia), the Capuchin Friars, the Franciscan Sisters (FSMA), and the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

On March 20, we went back to Gabremichael Centre, the Sector's central community located in Addis Ababa. The Brothers are planning on bringing the postulancy to this house. On March 24, together with the four members of the community – Brothers Kassu Fantaye (Sector

Coordinator), Belayneh Medhanit (Saint Joseph School's Director), Taye Weldesenbet (Community Director) and Amanuel Seifu – we celebrated Brother Peter Groot's 60th Jubilee of Religious Life.

On Tuesday, March 21, at 2:00 in the afternoon, we left for the city of Adama, also called Nazareth. We stopped at *Babogaya Retirement Centre*, the beautiful retirement home of the Sector located at Babogaya Lake. The presidents of South Sudan and Djibouti, who also own houses around the lake, are among the Brother's distinguished neighbours. There is a century-old tree at the entrance of the property, to which the local Oromo people are very much attached.

Saint Joseph Catholic School in the city of Adama (Nazareth) was originally founded by the *Franciscan Sisters* (FMND) and eventually handed over to the Brothers. This Lasallian school is the most prestigious in the city. It has 2610 students, and a teaching, administrative and support staff of 116 people. In a meeting with Young Lasallians held in the school, Brother Superior distributed autographed certificates. But how visible are the three Brothers of this community in such a large institution? The few Brother vocations in the Sector are mainly coming from parishes. Our schools in Ethiopia have very few Catholic students. Where can we find our vocations today? At what age are young people making important decisions about life, such as considering the Brother's vocation? The kind of social commitment that Brother Samson is leading in the *MC House of Dire Dawa*, involving our alumni who are now university students, can become a good starting point for vocations ministry.

Thursday, March 23, began with a visit to *Saint John Baptist de La Salle School* in Addis Ababa. It was built by the *Charity Sisters of Mother Teresa* and entrusted to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Brother Kassu, Coordinator of the Ethiopia Sector, took over as first Director in 2010. It has 1862 students from kindergarten to high school, and each class has from 50 to 60 students. Senior students (grade 12) are separated in all-boy (45) and all-girl (60) classes. They had the privilege of meeting with Brother Superior to receive his advice and share their concerns about the possibility of attending Lasallian universities. In addition to the United States and Europe, the Superior indicated the Lasallian universities in the Philippines as a possibility.

Due to limited recreational space, the different class groups came to the courtyard on a turn-by-turn basis to participate in the school assembly with

Brother Superior General, who solemnly granted awards and gifts to the most deserving students in the presence of their parents. Two young people with disabilities, assisted by two young friends – all from the *Missionaries Sisters of Charity's* centre – performed a beautiful choreography. At the end of the event, we shared some homemade bread, biscuits and coffee. Brother Superior was finally invited to deliver gifts to the students who had passed the end-of-cycle exams with best grades. Then we swiftly drove to the Embassy of the United States, but arrived 15 minutes late. We were received by Mr Li Ping Lo, Secretary for Cultural Affairs, since the new ambassador would not take office before July. The purpose of this visit was to explore the possibility of getting support from the US Embassy for the *Ethiopian Catholic University of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (ECUSTA), which the Episcopal Conference of Ethiopia has asked the Brothers to administer.

After the appointment at the Embassy, we went for lunch to *Saint Joseph's School* in Addis Ababa. While there, we met Mr Demisse Wjaregay AFSC, a former Ethiopian Brother who was the first Director at Saint Joseph's elementary and secondary schools. He made his novitiate in Lebanon and is fluent in French. A Brother for 20 years, he is now an Affiliated Member of the Institute. He knew Sylvain Toé, the first Burkinabe Brother (Voltaic at that point), and first Visitor of the West Africa District. He was also friends with Brother Yemanu Jehar from Eritrea, who became General Councillor. Mr Wjaregay is a living library about the beginnings of the Lasallian mission in Ethiopia and beyond.

Arepresentative of the parents' Association expressed his gratitude to the Brothers. According to him, the school combines excellence and equity, since it serves both rich and poor students. He stressed the parents' collaboration in the construction of a new building within the

school, which will be completed in seven months. Brother Superior rediscovered another building that has been turned into the library, where he conducted a workshop in 1998, behind which the current construction is taking place.

On Friday, March 24, Brother Superior met separately with Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, Archbishop of Addis Ababa, and Archbishop Luigi Bianco, Apostolic Nuncio to Ethiopia. Both meetings were focused on the *Ethiopian Catholic University of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (ECUSTA), and allowed us to realize how the construction of this university is proceeding, given that the Ethiopian Episcopal Conference, as we mentioned above, has entrusted it to the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The statutes and the agreement (Memorandum of Understanding - MOU) were signed that same day in the afternoon by the Cardinal, representing the Episcopal Conference, and the Superior General, on behalf of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. The Cardinal insisted on presiding over the Mass of Thanksgiving for Brother

Peter Groot's 60th Jubilee of Religious Life, in which the Sector Council participated at full. It was the icing on the cake of the visit to the Ethiopia Sector.

Sectors of Nigeria and Eritrea

Due to visa issues, as we mentioned above, Brother Superior had to postpone his pastoral visit to the Sector of Nigeria. But since Brother Pierre Ouattara needed no visa, he was able to participate in the celebration of Brother Peter Damian's perpetual vows. On Saturday, April 1st, almost all the Brothers of the Nigeria Sector gathered in Ondo City for the occasion. The Mass was presided over by Monsignor Jude Ayodeji Arogundade, Bishop of Ondo, and the vows were received by Brother Ghebreyesus Habte, the Lwanga District Visitor. It took place at Saint Joseph's Parish Church, and the party was held in the neighbouring La Salle College. After several attempts, neither Brother Superior nor Brother Pierre were able to get a visa at the consulate of Eritrea, so the visit to that Sector was also postponed.

District of Congo-kinshasa

Congo-Kinshasa was the RELAF District where Brother Superior spent the most time. The *Secretariat of Solidarity and Development* has also taken this District as one of their priorities. The pastoral visit began with a special welcome at the airport on Friday, April 21, which included a speech from a former student, a flower bouquet, and an interview with a Catholic radio station. Then the official car of Mr Kengo Wa Dondo, President of the Senate, arrived at the airport with a convoy headed by a motorcycle equipped with a siren. The President and

Vice President of the Senate are former students of the Brothers, so the car was at the Superior General's disposal for the duration of his stay.

On Sunday, April 23, there was a large meeting with the alumni, most of them members of the *Association of Former Students of the Brothers of the Christian Schools* (ASSANEF). This association committed to creating a foundation to support the Lasallian Educational Mission. After the meeting, we visited the ASSANEF headquarters, where they carry out different

activities. This was followed by a special dinner. The President of the Senate would later invite Brother Superior to have lunch at his official residence.

On Monday, April 24, we visited the *Professional Institute of Gombe* (IPG). It includes a Social Centre where girls living in poverty can learn literacy and sewing. Then we went to *De La Salle College*, also in the municipality of Kinshasa-Gombe, where Brother Visitor has recently appointed a lay Director. On Tuesday, April 25, *Saint George Primary and Secondary School* offered an enthusiastic welcome to Brother Superior. In the afternoon, he met with the first-year postulants. They will spend the second year of Postulancy living in different apostolic communities.

On Wednesday, April 26, we visited the educational community and brand-new buildings of the *Brother Zuzza School* complex, and then met the students and educational team of the neighbouring *Brother Alingba School*. As he admired the school campus and its courtyard shaded by large trees, Brother Superior described it as a “boulevard of wisdom”. He was impressed by the students’ discipline and calm. The main activity on Thursday, April 27, was the

solemn launching of the Young Lasallians Movement. On April 29 and 30, we attended what could be called ‘Tumba’s rebirth’: the restored buildings of the *Tumba Kunda Institute* were inaugurated during the final sports competitions among Lasallian institutions. In these happy circumstances, the party went on until late at night.

On Tuesday, May 2, the District organised a farewell dinner in the recreation area called Lasallian Centre, during which a former student of the Fine Arts School created by the Brothers – who happens to be one of the greatest artists of the Congo – gave Brother Superior a beautiful sculpture titled “The Angel”. It symbolizes Brother Robert in his role as Superior, a messenger who brings good news. The most admirable person for her dedication and leading role throughout Brother Superior’s visit was Madame Bernice – besides another lady who wishes to remain anonymous – who was always present, together with a team of hospitality students from *Saint George School*, providing a welcoming atmosphere and quality food. Another surprise during the visit was the proposal from a cement company CEO – former student of *La Salle Bonanova School* in Barcelona – to reopen the Belgian School located in Tumba-Lukala.

District of the Gulf of Benin

On Saturday, March 25, the Brothers' community in the town of Akassato was the first to welcome Brother Superior on Beninese soil. But the real destination that day was the remote *Monsignor Steinmetz School* in the city of Bohicon, a hundred kilometres away from Cotonou Airport. At 6:00 in the afternoon, we made a courtesy visit to Monsignor Eugène Cyrille Houndekon, Bishop of Bohicon.

On Monday, March 27, we visited *Monsignor Steinmetz School*. It was founded by a group of French-speaking Canadian Brothers in 1956, nationalized in 1974, and returned to the Brothers by the State in 1990. It presently has 765 pupils (425 boys and 340 girls), and offers primary and secondary education. A marching band welcomed Brother Superior at the school entrance. Then the students, lined up like a guard of honour, sang and clapped until Brother Superior reached the flagpole and raised the Beninese flag. A group of students beautifully interpreted the national anthem with their flutes. Then Brother Director made a reflection on the Sunday Gospel, and gave some practical information. After this ceremony, we were all invited to the



multipurpose room, where some students – led by two teachers and supported by the school band – put on a show to welcome the

Superior General. After the delivery of gifts, the Director invited Brother Superior – very much to the students' delight – to perform a few dance steps following the music. Another highlight of the day was the Superior General's meeting with the alumni, who form an Association that has legal personality in the country.



The whole day of Tuesday, March 28, revolved around the inauguration of *La Salle School Complex* in the town of Akassato, located in the outskirts of Cotonou. The celebration started with a ceremonial dance to welcome Brother Superior, the guest of honour. The thanksgiving Mass was presided over by Monsignor Antoine Ganye, Bishop Emeritus of Cotonou, and beautifully sung by the school choir. The *Minister for Secondary and Technical Education*, a representative of *Kindergarten and Primary Education*, and several civil and customary authorities were among the participants. A group of women and men Religious, priests (including the Diocesan and National Directors of Catholic Education), parents, alumni, and former Brothers also honoured the educational community with their presence. Delegations from the other institutions of the District joined this historic celebration. A plaque commemorating the event was unveiled



jointly by Brother Superior and the *Minister for Secondary Education*. Brother Francisco Martínez then received a gift from Brother Superior General for his contribution to the construction of the first building of the school complex, and his 48 years of service in Africa. This tireless builder is now more than 80 years old.

On Wednesday, March 29, after stopping briefly in Ouidah and Togoville, we arrived at the District House in Lomé, Togo. We left Cotonou as 6:00 in the morning, skilfully and carefully led by Brother Paulin Degbe, Visitor of the Gulf of Benin. Our first stop was the city of Ouidah in Benin, historical site and cradle of the Voodoo

Religion. Between the 17th and the 19th centuries, around a million people were taken from Ouidah, a hub of the slave trade, to different places across the Atlantic without any hope of coming back home. We visited the *Gate of No Return*, a monument in remembrance of the slave trade, built at the initiative of UNESCO and inaugurated in 1995. In 2000, the Catholic Church built the *Gate of Return* a few meters away, to recall the arrival of the first religious missionaries. On Friday, March 31, Brother Superior met with the leading team of the Young Lasallians Movement at the District House. A group of former students from Dapaong, Togo, started the movement at Lomé University in 2011-2012.



Delegation of Rwanda

We arrived in Kigali on Wednesday, October 19, 2016, and it could be said that Brother Superior actually started his pastoral visit to RELAF the next day at the *Intiganda Centre*! This institution – located in the city of Butare, and whose name means *courage* – was founded in 1988 by Brother Othmar Würth, and is today one of the most significant works of the Rwanda Delegation. It was initially intended to accommodate a small number of children in difficulty, who were to be monitored primarily by their own families. After the genocide, many children found themselves alone, without family protection, and the Centre had to expand considerably. It presently serves 62 children between the ages of 6 and 19, but the upper-age limit is normally 16. Often called “street children”, they come from broken families, and are sometimes in trouble with the law. *Intiganda Centre* is a place where they can

eat, sleep, and find someone to care for them, although they are always free to stay or leave. The Centre tries to provide a family atmosphere, and school support. A team, comprising lay people and Religious men and women, looks after the children. They share their passion for a group of kids who are not welcomed by society.

A child read the following message to the Superior General on behalf of his companions:

“Dear Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, dear visitors, we are very happy to have you here with us. You cannot imagine how dear you are to us children of the Intiganda Centre; only God and our hearts know it. Even though we are “street children”, we are human beings like any other. Many family problems drove us to the streets... However, there is now someone who cares for

us; we are blessed, and can change our bad behaviour; we can become better people and prepare our future lives. The Brothers of our community and the educators at Intiganda Center are like our parents. We will follow their example; we will watch everything they do to show us the Almighty. We hear the story of Saint John Baptist de La Salle every day, and will also follow his example. May God bless you, and bless everything you will do from now on. Thank you!”

In reply, Brother Superior General told them the following story:

Once upon a time, there was an old man who spent his time making pencils. With each pencil he made, he untiringly repeated five tips full of wisdom:

Let someone’s hand hold you. Only then will you achieve great things.

Let yourself be sharpened and pointed: it will not go without pain, without struggle, but the quality of your work will depend on it.

Get yourself an eraser: learn from your mistakes by correcting them.

Remember that the external wood is not what really matters: it is the graphite core – what lies inside you.

Leave your mark in the world by doing beautiful things.

The first day ended with a visit to the Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle in the city of Muhanga, where they were planning to open their first community in December 2016, and a new kindergarten and primary school in January 2017. This foundation became possible thanks to the generosity of a Rwandan Sister’s family who donated the land where the Sisters’ school and residence will be located.

On Friday morning, October 21, there was a celebration at Saint John Baptist de La Salle School in the village of Kirenge. From 7:00 o’clock, a lively and beautiful Eucharistic celebration – presided over by





Monsignor Servilian Nzakamwita, Bishop of Byumba – gave the students the opportunity to give glory to God with their beautiful singing and dancing. The Bishop delivered his homily in the local language and, very much at ease, invited the students to ask themselves what group of pupils they belonged to: those who know what they must do, and simply do it; those who know what they must do, but often need someone to remind them about their duties; and finally, those who know what they must do, but do not care, although someone keeps reminding them about their duties.

After the Mass, we began the actual inauguration ceremony of the kindergarten with the blessing of the classrooms. Both the Bishop and the Superior General planted a tree and laid a memorial stone. A tour of the entire school gave us an overview of the facilities. Besides visiting the primary and secondary school classrooms, and a well-equipped computer room, we also saw the farming area, where rabbits, sheep and cows are raised to provide meat and milk for the almost 300 children in the school. The La Salle Kirenge school complex

also includes a programme for children who have dropped out of school and receive training in sewing, mechanics and masonry. The beauty of the ballets, songs, dances – and even some acrobatic feats – that the students performed, somehow spoke about the quality education that all of them, from the youngest to the oldest, are receiving.

Finally, several people intervened to indicate how important it is that *La Salle Kirenge* keeps moving forward. The District Education Officer, a representative of the Ministry of Education, told the students that their school was the best in his District. Brother Superior praised this work, and congratulated Brother Aniceto Ramírez, the Brothers of the Delegation of Rwanda, and the team of educators for their commitment. He greeted and thanked the generous donors who participated in the inauguration ceremony, as well as the volunteers who make the different school projects come true.

On Saturday, October 22, we celebrated the perpetual profession of Brothers Ernest Tuganyesu and Emmanuel Muhayimana in Byumba. Their second

names respectively mean “Let us go to Jesus” and “I offer it to God”. In the light of our Brothers’ final consecration to God, their names prove to be prophetic, and even a foreshadowing of their vocational story. Indeed, the Brothers have been faithful to the life program set by their names. For the first time in the history of the Delegation, Brother Superior General personally received the perpetual vows. Time flew by, although the celebration lasted three and a half hours. The beauty of the songs animated our prayer, the liturgical dance captured our attention, and all the assembly participated in the singing and dancing.

Then the participants were invited to move to the multipurpose room of *La Salle Teacher Training Centre*. As is traditionally the case in Rwanda, the rhythmic hammering of enormous drums welcomed the distinguished guests. The students of *De La Salle Academy* and *La Salle Teacher Training Centre*, the two Lasallian institutions in Byumba, delighted the audience with their beautiful dances, in which the feminine undulating elegance contrasted with the masculine strength and flexibility. The Delegation’s tradition of presenting gifts to newly-professed Brothers was honoured, and Brother Jean Bosco Bigirimana, President of the Delegation, sang a song he wrote for them as a gift. In his closing speech, Monsignor Servilian Nzakamwita thanked the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and stated that, in his view, there was much to learn from the vows ceremony, for instance, how important families are in the education of children, and how meaningful the name parents give to their children can be.

It is worth recalling Brother Superior General’s final message delivered on Sunday, October 23, 2016. He praised the Delegation’s efficient organization and communication effort regarding the visit,

which speak about the commitment of its President, Brother Jean Bosco Bigirimana, and its Delegate, Brother Anatole Diretenadji. He said he was happy to know that basically all the Brothers in the Delegation are teaching, and not exclusively carrying out administrative tasks. “This is important if we want to be credible as Brothers of the Christian Schools” – he said. Citing Saint Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, which calls us to put on of the new man, he invited the Brothers to unleash a spiritual revolution. He urged us to ask ourselves: why are we here? “We must bring Jesus to the world, and He must become transparent through us. What should be the quality of our presence among students, lay teachers, and whomever we meet, so that everyone can perceive the presence of Christ through us? Our charism is a gift we make to the Church, but it also calls each of us to holiness!” – he stated. “Our lay partners should have a leading role in Lasallian education and, therefore, we must offer them formation opportunities. What voices are calling us today? ‘One Call, Many Voices’ is the inspirational theme for this year. The same call resounds through the voices of students, lay partners, parents, and the Church. The Holy Spirit – without fanfare of trumpets – bursts quietly into our lives in several ways”. He went on saying that we have been granted new sources of inspiration for our life as Brothers today, such as *The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis, the *Rule of 2015*, and the Vatican instruction *Identity and Mission of the Religious Brother in the Church*. And he concluded with a very realistic call to the Brothers: “We need inspiration and accompaniment. How can we take care of each other? How can we support our Directors? How can we help the Brothers in difficulty? When a Brother asks for dispensation a year or two after perpetual profession, you cannot help but wondering what went wrong. What kind of formation and support did he get?”

Sector of Mozambique

The Sector of Mozambique officially belongs to the District of Brazil-Chile, although it is a regular guest at the RELAF Visitors' Conference. We foresee that this Sector will eventually join one of the Administrative Units of the Region, and in fact, a dialogue with the Lwanga District is underway. Due to a delayed flight with Ethiopian Airlines, Brother Superior was unable to attend the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Brothers' arrival in Mozambique, which took place on Sunday, March 12.

At 7:00 in the morning on Monday, March 13, Brother Superior addressed the students and teachers of *Saint John XXIII Catholic School* in the city of Beira. This diocesan centre goes from kindergarten to high school. With nearly 3,000 students, it is a double-shift school, with morning and afternoon classes. Brother Superior then went to *De La Salle Private School*, a new centre belonging to the Sector. The school is in full development. Kindergarten and elementary school are fully operational, and the pupils are even beginning to study

English. La Salle Educational and Social Assistance Centre, located in a working-class neighbourhood, is the Brothers' third educational work in Beira. Brother Reinaldo Souza, the oldest Mozambican Brother, is the main animator. The centre includes a library, which also serves as study room, and several classrooms where volunteers, mainly young students, teach more than 200 children.

Brother Edgar Nicodem, Visitor of Brazil-Chile, and Brother Lino Jung, his representative for Mozambique, drove us to the airport. We stopped on the way to visit Monsignor Claudio Dalla Zuanna, Archbishop of Beira. An Argentine-born Italian, now Mozambican by adoption, he is also a Religious of the Sacred Heart (SCJ). He stated that the Brothers' presence in his diocese is very important, since they are the only congregation dedicated exclusively to education. He described *Saint John XXIII Catholic School* as the best in the country, an institution that educates 3,000 out of the 20,000 Catholic students of Mozambique. He hopes that the opening of new Lasallian centres will not lead the Brothers to withdraw from this diocesan school.





INTERVIEW WITH THE GENERAL COUNCILOR FOR THE REGION



*Ilaria Iadaluca
(Director of Communications
- Rome): Brother Pierre, as
General Councilor for the Region,
you accompanied the Superior General
throughout his pastoral visit. Share with us
some of your impressions.*

Wherever we went, we easily noticed that Lasallian students were proud of their school, proud of being Lasallians. Many people expressed their gratitude to the Lasallian Brothers and teachers during the visit. Students, parents, political and religious authorities, and people in general appreciate the Brothers and feel affection for them. However, Brothers must be careful not to become the victims of their own success. Maintaining quality education within the reach of the poor always requires vigilance and the ability to adapt ourselves to changing situations.

In many parts of the Region, there is a very good collaboration with other Congregations, such as the Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle in Madagascar, and the Charity Sisters of Mother Teresa in Ethiopia. We must also keep on trying to strengthen our collaboration with our lay partners, and the alumni and parent associations.

The vitality of the Guadalupana Sisters of La Salle also struck me. In my opinion, they deserve to be better known in the Region. They were born from the insight and apostolic zeal of a French Brother, Jean Fromental Cayroche, affectionately called Juanito. In 1944, after almost twenty years of dedicated service to education in the Archdiocese of Mexico, this Brother felt the need to start a female Religious Congregation that could collaborate with the Brothers of the Christian Schools in the mission of educating children and young people. Placed under the special protection of Our Lady of Guadalupe, this Congregation was to have Saint John Baptist de La Salle as inspiration and guide, and Saint Joseph as a special patron. On April 10, 1976, the Congregation was declared of pontifical right. It is now present in 11 countries, mainly in Latin America.





The Sisters, who have been firmly established in Madagascar for 25 years, opened two communities in 2015: one in Akassato (Benin), where they collaborate with the Brothers at the La Salle School Complex; and another in Muhanga (Rwanda), where their school is right next to the Brothers' school. As we said above, the land for the Sisters' school and community in Muhanga was donated by the father of a Rwandan Sister.

To the students and teachers:

"A Lasallian education, when it is faithful to the vision of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, is assured not by individuals but by a community of educators who work closely for the greater good of the young whom they serve. It is a matter of an education of relationships: teachers among themselves, teachers with their students, and students among themselves. "The new style of relations that De La Salle established for his schools makes room for love and tenderness in the educator. He realizes that education is above all a matter of trust, kindness, generosity and affectionate kindness, and that without love the best teaching techniques run the risk of being ineffective in the awakening and the growth of the person."

"I expect of you, teachers and students, to create an educational environment that builds bridges that unite people to promote the common good and break down the walls that distance us from each other. When I look at you, I see a lot of enthusiasm and goodwill. I sincerely believe that you can make a significant contribution to building a more inclusive, fair and respectful society. As Saint John Baptist de La Salle said to his first Brothers: "You can perform miracles by touching the hearts of those who are entrusted to your care". So please keep your eyes open and allow your heart to be touched by those who are different from you. I want you to listen to others to discover their joys and sorrows, their dreams and their failures. I invite you to commit yourselves to serving the common good and to concern yourself more specifically with those who live far from the advantages and opportunities of the contemporary world. Thank you!"

To the young Brothers:

"Dear young Brothers, it is a privilege for me to be faced with the future. Your dreams and hopes, convictions and commitments, your energy and enthusiasm are all necessary and useful for the life and vitality of the Institute today. You must rely on one another and support one another in continually discerning what God asks of you, and us, as Brothers of the Christian Schools. Your know-how with social networks facilitates the connection between you. But it is God, your Brothers in community, our Lasallian partners and the children and youth entrusted to you who are your main points of contact."

To the Visitors Conference:

I begin by thanking you for the great good that your Brothers and partners are doing in the schools, centres and institutions. The 93 schools and centres in the Region offer quality education to nearly 64,000 students. We congratulate you on your commitment to self-sufficiency and thank Brother Amilcare and the Secretariat for Solidarity and Development and the former Brother Bursar General Francisco Lopez for accompanying and working with you. The creation of the CARLA NGO and the

purchase of properties and the construction of schools belonging to the Brothers are important steps towards the goal of self-sufficiency.

The presence and ministry of the Guadalupana Sisters is a new wealth for the RELAF Lasallian mission. They, along with the Brothers of other Regions, the Signum Fidei and the Young Lasallian movements are all strong signs of the growth of the Lasallian Family in Africa and Madagascar.

Finally, we congratulate you on the implementation of strategic and communication plans for the Region.

As for the metaphor of **beyond the borders**, I shared with you and the Brothers throughout my visit that I understand the metaphor as having three meanings: geographical, personal and institutional, the last two being more important than the first, more important because the Brothers have always been beyond the geographical limits of their Districts and countries. You have many examples of these Brothers in the Region. I would especially like to thank you for the preparation and donation of your Brothers for the Fratelli Project, the critical mission of South Sudan and the Ethiopian Catholic University in Addis Ababa.

Inviting Brothers to go beyond their personal comfort zones and to face the difficult decision to stay or leave a particular Lasallian work are at the heart of the "beyond borders" metaphor.

We can be consumed by mission to the detriment of community and spiritual life. We are known for our professionalism. But what about our act of public consecration? What does it mean to engage as disciples of Christ; how can we discern between the requirements of our public consecration to God, and our own human and personal needs? What do the Brothers think and believe when they vow "to go wherever I am sent and to do what I shall be employed by the body of society or by its superiors"?

To integrate into our lives the three elements constituting our vocation – consecration, mission and community – is the responsibility of each Brother. Without this integration, we are





faced with a negative impact on the perseverance of our Brothers, especially our young Brothers. During my visits, I emphasized the challenge for the entire Institute to offer appropriate guidance to our young Brothers, community Directors, Heads of Schools, our Lasallian Partners and vice versa. In its wisdom, the Institute gives us four instruments for our human and religious development: the personal project, the community project, the personal interview and the annual canonical visit of the Visitor, the President and the Delegate to each community. Their implementation is not uniform in the Region. This needs to be corrected.

Letter at the end of the visit:

We are talking about the need for a conversion and renewal of the Institute in order to remain a vital force in the apostolic ministry of education. Whether we call it renewal or refoundation, personal and community conversion must begin in our communities. If this is not happening in our communities it is very likely that it will never happen, so we have to be attentive and support each other in the community. Our community is the home where we grow in friendship, trust and mutual respect, sharing our sufferings and joys. As needed we accept being challenged by our Brothers in a fraternal way. We pay special attention to our young brothers (Rule 49).

“Our religious consecration leads us to support our partners with whom we work in mission so that they become authentic protagonists in the Lasallian mission. In this communion of Brothers and partners there is a crucial inspiration: the Lasallian charism. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, as Pope Francis points out, charisms “are not an inheritance, safely held in security and entrusted to the care of a small group; they are rather gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, centred on Christ, and then invested in an evangelising impulse.” We realize that the effective integration of partners at all levels of our ministry of human and Christian education is conditioned by social, religious and political realities. Whatever these realities are in your District or Delegation, our partners are clearly indispensable to the Lasallian mission today. Thank you for your efforts in the development of the Lasallian Association in your context.”



AFRICAN STORIES AND EXPRESSIONS

Welcome to Child Discovery Centre (March 15, 2017)

Welcome, welcome oh welcome to CDC.
Welcome, welcome oh welcome to CDC. X2

We are happy for you for coming to see us,
we are happy for you for caring about us.

We are praying for you in all your endeavors,
and in all that you do may God grant you
peace.

You are our Brother oh dear Brother Schieler,
and in what we can see, you are destined to
do great.

We take pride in you for carrying the mantle,
and we all now follow you in your footsteps.
We assure you an everlasting love, and we
hope to see you again and again.

*A song composed to honour the visit
of Brother Superior General to CDC,
by Br Paul Anderson, FSC, Nakuru in Kenya*



The story of my life

One night, I had a dream. In my dream, I was caring for many patients from all walks of life.

In this dream, I looked happy, and life was so beautiful. I had a big house, a nice car, a beautiful family.

A dream come true because, in fact, I had worked so hard at school, I had always wanted to be a doctor.

Suddenly, I was awakened by footsteps around the house. I had to cut short my dream and go outside.

I still remember that day as if it was yesterday. Although I was young, it is always fresh in my mind like the morning dew.

The neighbours ran to our house and quickly into the courtyard. Small gatherings here and there.

They only whispered and shook their heads, as if they were in shock. Everyone was crying, tears ran down their cheeks, and those who could not cry were only silently staring. The whispers continued, and with every passing second, they became clearer:

- WOU! WOU! OH, SHE'S GONE, SHE'S DEAD, AND THE OTHER DAY WE BURIED HER HUSBAND.

- WITH HIV/AIDS YOU CANNOT LIVE LONG.

Gone? Who? How? When? Oh, she was just sick, but I thought she'd told me she was okay. Mother, why? Why? Who will take care of us?


A few days later, when they lowered her coffin six feet underground, reality struck me: she was no more, and I had a new title, "orphan". To my great surprise, the yard which was full a few days before was now empty.

Uncle, aunt, I want to go to school! Please pay my school fees. We are hungry, kindly give us food. My sister is sick; please take her to the hospital.

My mother's friends, where are you? (Stop bothering us, don't you have relatives?)

They all turned their backs on us.

Left to myself, no one to turn to, so my brothers, sisters and I found ourselves in the street.



Food leftovers became tasty pizzas for me. I found new friends, and on my list of friends there were bugs and rats. The lanes were my bedroom. It was really hard. I had to spend my life running just in case the municipal staff would decide to sweep up the street children. They would beat us without pity, and my whole body would hurt, but I knew nobody would take me to the hospital. With a powerless look, I watched big boys take advantage of little girls; they made them their wives; some gave birth and others aborted.

The idea of staying overnight in a police cell made me sick...

There was no school, and the beautiful dream I once had became just “a dream”. Who would make it happen?

Days, months, years passed. But one day a man came and took pity on me, he took me in his car and the next place where I found myself was Child Discovery Centre. I took a bath, ate and slept like a baby. The next morning, I was taken to school. I later learned that this good man was a Lasallian Brother.

At last, I could dream again. Last night, I had the same dream. As I was dreaming, suddenly laughter filled the room. When I went out, people were happy. The little groups I saw this time were not whispering, they were shouting and shouting: “These are our friends from Italy, they are finally here!”

And they came with a message from the Pope. This is the year of mercy, go and show mercy to the children of Child Discovery Centre...

And now I can smile and smile because these friends from Italy are here to make sure the dream comes true.

Smile, smile, smile. I’m happy!

Presented by Grace, a girl from Child Discovery Centre in Nakuru

Mission of hope in South Sudan

In 2009, I accepted what I considered a challenge – to leave Australia for South Sudan. It was also an opportunity to walk with the people of the youngest nation on earth, in their efforts to recover from the many years of war. The mission was to be a new way for Religious of different congregations and nationalities to respond in a collaborative way to the call. At that time, the difficulties we had encountered seemed daunting, but there was a booming optimism in the country, a sense of stability and security and hope for prosperity in the not too distant future.



Now, I think of those years as a time when we followed Christ in his public life, helping the poor and the needy, helping children receive better education, ensuring better health and pastoral care among the population. We were missionaries of hope. In 2013 the Solidarity Council decided to relocate the post of Executive Director to South Sudan and I was invited to accept greater responsibility for the whole organization.

We remain because we feel called even more to be missionaries of hope. Most teacher training schools and health training institutes closed once the violence covered the entire country. But our two Institutes, each with more than 110 resident students continued, students from different tribes living and training to become teachers, nurses or midwives. Our agricultural programs help to provide the necessary food.

More importantly, our students are learning to live in peace with their neighbours from other tribes. We are preparing leaders for the next generation, promoters of peace and the promise that there can be a resurrection - if only we stay with them in this critical moment. Life here for us is oddly normal, provided we accept the few social and recreational activities and take no unnecessary risks. Security may not be adequate, but we are much safer than these poor people, the same poor who ask us to observe, accompany, and seek with them a better South Sudan.

Brother Bill Firman, *Executive Director of Solidarity with South Sudan*

VISION AND LINES OF ACTION FOR THE REGION

RELAF within the dynamics of the 45th General Chapter and following its 6th Nairobi Regional Assembly from 11 to 14 January 2016, adopted its basic texts stating:

Its vision of the 46th General Chapter

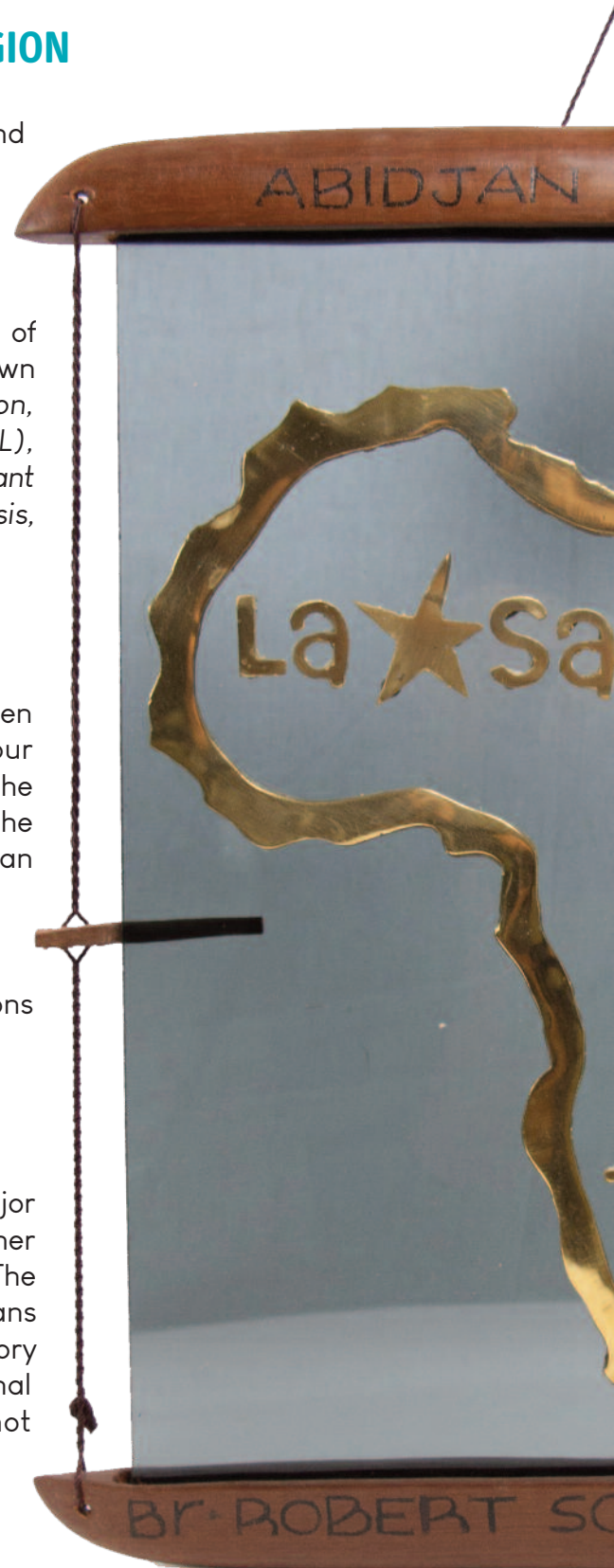
“Taking into account the different proposals of the acts of the 45th General Chapter, our Region establishes its own vision around the following points: *communication, association and the Lasallian educational mission (CIAMEL), bilingualism, higher education, self-management, a significant common work of our option for the poorest, catechesis, ministry of pastoral vocations*”. (Constitutions of RELAF)

Its commitment to the Lasallian educational mission in Africa

Moved by the situation of abandonment of many children left to themselves mainly in the urban areas of our continent, and in response to the contemplation of the saving plan of God, we associate ourselves, Brothers of the African Region and Lay Lasallians sharing the Lasallian charism, with a view to creating and bringing within reach of the most deprived the works of human and Christian formation of quality, in a context where education tends to be reduced to a business. (Constitutions of RELAF)

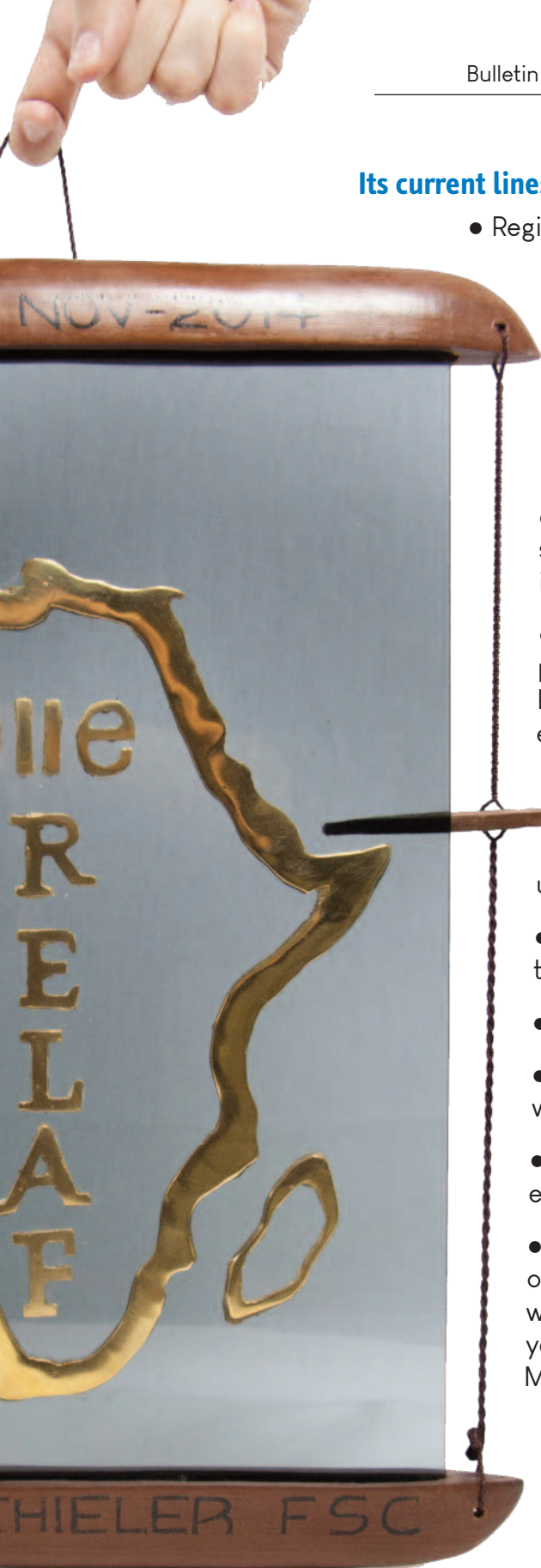
Its concern for the pastoral work of vocations and the memory of the Lasallian mission in Africa

“We find at the beginning of our different vocations major figures of the Lasallian Educational Mission such as Brother Raphael Louis Rafiringa (1856-1919) beatified in 2009. The intercession and the influence of our Brothers and Lasallians constitute powerful means of vocation ministry. The history and memory of the pioneers of the Lasallian Educational Mission in Africa, the essential of which is still not recognised, deserve to be written and valued in this sense”. (Constitutions of RELAF)



Its current lines of action:

- Regional coordination is effective through an efficacious team.
 - A regional strategic plan exists and is being implemented.
 - The Annual Conferences of the Brothers Visitors are regular with the effective participation of all the members.
 - Representation of RELAF in formation sessions, commissions, councils, international committees and services of the Institute is effective but is subject to improvement.
 - The principle of solidarity sharing and actual participation in the operating costs of the structures of the Region is admitted even if its application is not always effective.
 - A regional confederation of Lasallian NGOs in Africa (CARLA) for the coordination of development projects has been set up. The formal recognition process is underway.
 - A regional CIL has been organized and another will soon take place.
 - The process towards a single Conference has begun.
 - Prospecting for a new regional initiative for the poorest with a community across borders is well advanced.
 - Prospecting for a new initiative in the field of higher education is under way.
 - The mobilization of everyone around the important events of one or another District, for example, the presence of the whole Conference last November at the celebration of 150 years of presence of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Madagascar.





ORIENTATIONS COMING FROM THE CLOSING SESSION

The observations of the General Councilors who, after a few visits, took part in the closing conference, are summed up as follows: there is a real commitment of the Brothers and the laity to the mission; there is creativity and initiative in the service of the poor; there is good collaboration between the Brothers and other members of the Lasallian Family and a good organization of the Lasallian Family. The Brothers Councilors encourage the Brothers to continue and strengthen the service with the poor. Progress has been made in areas such as: awareness of the need to move towards self-sufficiency, formation everywhere about children's rights and protection, concern for transparency in each District and Delegation and promotion of vocations and also the association between Brothers and lay people.

Other comments:

Pay attention to the maintenance of buildings and structures.

Strengthen networking and twinning with other Districts outside the Region.

Establish and organize communities taking into account the acts of the 45th General Chapter.

Review the job descriptions in the district administration.

Become aware that we are Brothers of the Institute and not only of a District.

Go beyond geographical, but especially institutional and personal boundaries.

Insist on bilingualism, especially in formation houses.

Think about a regional project in South Sudan.

Prepare competent staff for Lasallian formation.

Develop inclusive formation programs, with stages, in line with the Institute's vision.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCILLOR FOR THE REGION

Having accompanied Brother Superior General throughout his pastoral visit, I witnessed admirable examples of availability, warm welcome, dedication and generosity. My sincere thanks to all the Visitors, Brothers, Sisters, and Lasallians. God bless you! May our holy Founder, John Baptist de La Salle, always watch over you and intercede for you!

With the assurance of my prayers,

Brother Pierre Ouattara



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RELAF

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