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PARTAGE AUTEUJL

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CONTENTS

Editorial

Sr. Catherine Sesboüé, Auteuil Community

1. **M Marie Eugenie and Holiness** Sr. Thérèse Maylis, Archivist

2. Saints of our Countries

2.1. In the Americas

Central America-Cuba: Saint Romero of America, St. Maria Romero, St. Pedro de Betancur, Blessed José Olallo Valdès

Ecuador-Chili: St. Albert Hurtado, St. Teresa of the Andes, St. Miguel Febres Cordero

Mexico: St. Juan Diego Cuahtlatoatzin

USA: St. Katharine Drexel

2.2. In Africa

Central Africa: St. Anuarite

East Africa: Mwalimu Julius Nyerere

West Africa: Alfred Simon Diban, Anthony Duraman

Rwanda-Chad: Our Lady of Kibeho

3. The Chapel of Auteuil

- The Way of the Cross

4. Family Chronicles

- Visits and Activities of the General Council
- Anniversaries of Foundations
- 3rd Year International Session
- Election of P. Général des Assomptionnistes

5. Partage Auteuil: n°87

6. A Word from Marie Eugenie of Jesus

EDITORIAL

Saints – us as well?

Entering into the sanctuary of St. Marie-Eugenie in the new chapel in Auteuil, on the rock of the ancient altar, one can read on one side “Mère Maire-Eugénie Milleret” and on the other “Sainte Marie-Eugénie de Jésus”. In between, a whole life... all the process that the Church recognised on June 3rd 2007 as worthy of presenting as an example. Today, her holiness urges us, her daughters, to listen to the breath of the Spirit in us and around us, so that the Kingdom of God may grow.

At our baptism, plunged with Christ into death so that we could be resurrected with him, the celebrant pronounced these words, calling each one of us by their first name:

“I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Joining the immense crowd of witnesses to Christ, we have been invested by the Trinity, becoming brothers and sisters of Christ, children of the same Father. Then the celebrant marked us with the seal of the Holy Spirit through anointing with chrism:

“God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet, and King, so may you live always as members of his body, sharing everlasting life.”¹

Later on, when we were confirmed, the Bishop, laying his hands on the confirmands that we were, prayed saying:

“All-powerful God, Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by water and the Holy Spirit you freed your sons and daughters from sin and gave them a new life.

Send your Holy Spirit upon them to be their helper and guide. Give them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of right judgement and courage, the spirit of knowledge and reverence. Fill them with the spirit of

¹ Prayer before the anointing with chrism at baptism [the text given is the official English translation]

wonder and awe in your presence.”²

The Spirit is the concrete memory of our birth in God, the seal that we received at baptism and at confirmation.³

Reading this ‘Partage Auteuil’ we cannot but marvel at the work of grace in those who have gone before us on the path of faith, by the strength that the Spirit gave them. Our sisters of the Provinces of America and Africa offer us a truly spiritual bouquet. In El Salvador, the cause of Bishop Romero continues with the study of his texts and homilies. The people of El Salvador hope to have their nation’s first saint and martyr.

During the evening of prayer of the eve of the beatification of Marie-Eugenie in 1975, Cardinal Marty challenged the assembly: “From age to age the type of saints has changed, it will change again.”⁴

These few lines are written between the feast of the Ascension and Pentecost, the day of the anniversary of the canonisation of Saint Marie- Eugenie.

May she, with the Assumption in heaven, our families and friends, anonymous witnesses to Christ, renew us in welcoming the Spirit of holiness, and so may we become holy.

“Like the day, the Spirit and his light!
No one can escape him or seize him!
All received life from his grace:
the life of the Father given to the Son.

Like fire, the Spirit and his force!
Who could contain this, or stifle it?
Nothing can resist his strength:
love of the Father and of his Son.

Like the wind, the Spirit and his visit!
No one knows where he comes from or where he goes to!

² Prayer during the laying on of hands on the confirmands [the text given is the official English translation]

³ Missel des dimanches 2011, p. 367 [Sunday Missal 2011]

⁴ Mgr François Marty, Homily, Saturday 8th February 1975 at the prayer vigil before the beatification of Marie-Eugenie

Only a whisper remains:
the name of the Father at the heart of his sons.

Catherine Sesboüé, ra
Auteuil Community
4th Anniversary of the Canonisation
3rd June 2011

1. M. MARIE EUGENIE AND HOLINESS

Mother Marie Eugenie and Holiness

or

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

Devotion to the saints – which is one of the characteristics of the spirit of the Assumption – is not just devotion to three or four saints who are particularly well known and honored in the time in which we live, but devotion to all the saints (cf. Chapter of 12 May 1878: On Devotion to the Saints and Love of the Divine Office).

And Marie Eugenie successively quotes the **evangelical saints**. *It was among them that Our Lord lived... they prepared and announced His Kingdom, then the **apostles** because of our attachment to the Church, **other saints** who surrounded our Lord, who had the honor of being called His **friends**, the **martyrs** who founded the Church with their blood, **those who expanded the Christian faith**, who spread it throughout the world, who made it more understandable, the **Doctors** and the **founders of religious orders**, who received from God special graces for the religious life...*

Then follow the names of Saint Benedict, Saint Francis (of Assisi), Saint Teresa, Saint Ignatius...

Elsewhere it is Saint Augustine, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Dominic... and so many others.

I am pointing this out to you so that you can see how universal should be our devotion to the saints ...

It is easier for you to know the saints, to have a greater devotion to them because you recite the Office and are constantly reading their lives.

Read the very beautiful pages on love of the Divine Office, *praise to God*.

In 1961, on a summer day, the Congregation rejoiced for the title of *Venerable*, accorded to Mother Marie Eugenie by Pope John XXIII. In 1975, the *Beatification*, by Pope Paul VI, was celebrated as a long awaited grace; it was a winter morning, enlightened by a beautiful Roman light. And in 2007, the joy of the *Canonization* by Pope Benedict XVI could burst forth *under thousands of umbrellas*, in the midst of streaming water, harbinger of future harvests.

Marie Eugenie Milleret, *foundress, saint...*

Books, magazines, articles, presented her life. Her image, photo or icon, are spread around the world. Throughout the Provinces, diverse initiatives made and make her known. In Auteuil, her body rests as a foundation stone, in the wall behind the altar. Her message and her work draw forth prayers of thanksgiving or requests; the footsteps of pilgrims and the silent recollection of a face to face.

She can be named during the Eucharist. The Office of her feast, **10 March**, is celebrated in the Church.

What do we underscore about her path to holiness?

Her spiritual notes, her correspondence her life and her work, reveal it to us⁵

Some selected milestones; some significant steps:

- Before the foundation, at the age of 20, a dream and a hope (after having evoked her *illustrious contemporaries, Lamennais before his fall, Lacordaire, Montalembert, and so many others*) :

*... My humble sacrifice, if it is complete, God will bless it, as [He blesses] their grand ideas. Perhaps I shall accomplish great things, perhaps I shall have **saints** as children, and perhaps they, in turn, will have influence for salvation. All that can be, if I only know how to die perfectly to myself so that Jesus Christ can live in me, the God who deigns to descend there. Then He will place there what He can reward. What a marvel of love. There one can only humble oneself and adore.* (Notes Intimes, n°154/10)

- In 1842, at 25 years, after the 1st Vows:

*I desire to become a **saint** which is my whole preoccupation. I reproach myself on this as I see it as pride especially when I feel displeasure at seeing others more advanced than me and to believe that He has holier plans for them... But with this jealous desire for holiness, I feel a violent repugnance towards the means of becoming one, sometimes I do not want the sufferings*

⁵ Cf. E.A. n° 2: *Ten years after the Beatification Mother Marie Eugenie* / 1985

E.A. n° 6: *The Prayer of Mother Marie Eugenie, A Path to Holiness* / 1989

Partage Auteuil n°11 / 1974: *Stages in the Spiritual Life of Mother Marie Eugenie of Jesus*, p. 17-57

Partage Auteuil n°78 /2005: *Marie Eugenie and the Paschal Mystery*

the Saints endured, sometimes I make fun with bitterness of my desire to arrive at where they have arrived. (Notes Intimes, n°240/01)

- In 1849, at 32, in the middle of activities in view of the Cap foundation:

*I begged Him to tell me what He wanted of me and here is what came to me the most strongly: **I must be enough for you.** You can well and you ought, since I want it[,] leave this depth of your soul to go up towards others, give yourself to them with my spirit, love them with an extreme charity that I will inspire in you and of which I am the model. Go there in my place, as I would go, and with an untiring zeal to make me a place in the heart of each of them. **But I do not want** you to take your mainstay there., that you think you cannot get along without them, that you even have need of them. —**I should be enough for you.** (Notes Intimes, n°207/01)*

- In 1850, at 33, the following year, *the age at which Christ died:*

I am impressed by the thought that having employed soon 33 years in self-seeking, I would like finally to unite myself to the death of Jesus Christ, whose age it is, to renounce self at last and henceforth fix my abode in the love of God and neighbor and in forgetfulness of self. (Notes Intimes, n°208/01)

- En 1856, at 39, during her annual retreat:

*It seems to me that this retreat ought to be a complete renewal in my life. I am 39; why should I not walk now in the way of **holiness**. Death is the complement of the religious profession; why should I not see myself as dead from today on... If I ask so much to die, it is to live as a spouse of Jesus Christ... try to be 'perfectly dead' to everything that is not God, lovingly humbled/abased in His abiding presence, and being the faithful image of Jesus Christ, living only for Him, with Him and of Him. (Notes Intimes n°217/01)*

- In 1867, at 49, after the Véron case:

*It will soon be half a century that I have been on earth. What will remain from this long time, even if I take only my religious life? ... Why am I committed to the service of Our Lord? Can I imagine that it is to build houses, organize foundations etc.? No certainly that is not the main thing. I belong to Jesus Christ to fight the devil, the world and the flesh, to love Our Lord, and to make him loved and known. Everything else is only the means, and I must not take the means for the work itself... I want to set myself to make a **holy year** in*

which the only thing I try for is to live with Jesus and to imitate Him ... Move towards death, leaving, annihilating myself... Use the time to strip myself of many things so as to be poor and be able to leave everything. (Notes Intimes, n° 227/01)

- In 1870, at 53, in the course of a war:

***Tend** towards God with purity and ardor even in action, as with a tree whose branches are allowed to perish so that the tip might rise straight and strong. And in my prayer, tend towards Jesus Christ present by grace in the depth of my heart. Create a tender intimacy of faith between me and Him in the Blessed Sacrament. (Notes Intimes, n°229/01)*

- En 1877, at 60, after the General Chapter of 1876:

To love Jesus Christ, understand that He loves me, that He has looked after me, called me, followed me; that everyone I love – mother, brother, uncle, Father d’Alzon – have received from Him that which I loved and that which they lacked from fallen nature.../.../ That I should love Him more than these others and He loves me more in asking this of me: Simon Peter “do you love me more than these others?” (Notes Intimes, n°233/01)

- In 1878, at 61, the year of the Chapters on the Spirit of the Assumption:

*I was touched by the thought that Jesus Christ wants to extend his reign in the heart of all, in my heart first of all, and I want to take all the means in this retreat so that He may reign in me; but also in all the other hearts, and he calls me to work ceaselessly with him to gain them for him. It is the reason why I am a **religious of the Assumption**, it is the aim of the **4th vow** that I have made. I ought not do anything, say anything, which hasn’t for aim to extend this reign. I ought always have for everyone a word that tends towards the reign. —and for myself, know that the Reign of Jesus Christ is in patience, poverty, humility and suffering. (Notes Intimes, n°234/01)*

- In 1885, at 68, in the midst of grave difficulties:

A look at Peter, the Apostle to whom Jesus had entrusted so many things, his Church!

My soul which was hurt and troubled recently, has refound Jesus in the meditation on Peter’s betrayal.

A look at Jesus...: How many things Jesus has entrusted to me!... What functions as mine if I take them from the aspect of the trust that Our Lord

shows me and of which I must show myself worthy. I want to and can now with this divine gaze that raises me up, work to deny myself... To do the work of Jesus, I need to let go, be detached from all... and the word of Jesus, the influence of Jesus... I need a great grace and a great light, I have asked for them. (Notes Intimes n°235/01)

*Take crosses and that of my family in particular, and all that follows from the hand of Jesus in a spirit of expiation, but also of love, of union with the sufferings, the humiliations and the poverty of Our Lord with great trust, hoping that these pains will do good to my soul and will give it Jesus—Never commit the folly of preferring a stiffness to the joy of being **with Jesus** by gentleness and humility.* (Notes Intimes n° 236/01)

- In 1890, at 73, in appeasement/calm:

My God, I thank you for the peace and the happiness that I have found in this retreat.

I clearly saw:

1° that I ought to practice exterior mortification to keep me from [seeking my] comfort, and interior [mortification] so that I don't follow the movements of my nature, of impatience, speaking of what shocks me, etc...and read books which encourage me to mortification like St. John of the Cross.

2° practice interior humility which gives in, places one beneath, bears the spirit of Jesus suffering without refusal or self-pity [turning 'round].

3° pray and get out of every difficulty by a tender love of Our Lord in his life and in the Blessed Sacrament.

4° follow my attraction to adoration [of God] through Him and give through Him all that is due to God.

5° make the courageous practice of my three vows the main work of my life.

- Finally in her last years, an undated text:

You ask me how to age graciously (in holiness)? – By working incessantly, the eyes on God, with an elevated patience and confidence in one's soul, one's affections, one's works to maintain the immortal youth of Jesus Christ, Who is our New Man, our Interior Man. – Keep your mind occupied with the truths of the Faith, like the mysteries of Jesus or His words, or His sufferings. – Keep your heart high up in heaven, which is your homeland and where you must already through hope live of the peace of the children of God, trying to be good like Him, always good and in everything. – Finally, as

old age is ordinarily the time of illness and of languor, bear them with the patience, gentleness and simplicity of the Lamb. I say this LAMB DIVINE Who is Jesus Christ. So what the Apostle Paul says will happen to you: "While the exterior being diminishes each day; the inner being is renewed." This is what a saintly old age does, which produces holy deaths, after which there is but a blessed eternity.

Beyond these few spiritual milestones, the path of holiness of Marie Eugenie goes from her baptism on 5 October 1817 in Preisch to her death in Auteuil on 10 March 1898.

- It passes through the joys and pains of childhood, through the grace of the First Communion in Metz, on 25 December 1829, through the painful moments of 1830 and its consequences, through the death of her mother and her gratitude for the education received, through the doubts and the struggles of adolescence and of youth, through the conversion of 1836 in Notre Dame, through the discovery the following year, of a call never considered: *"The Spirit fights in me like an eagle. – I just have to ask God what he wants and I know it very well when I have prayed."*

- And on 30 April 1839, with one sole companion, the enclosure in a small apartment in the rue Ferou, in the shadow of Saint Sulpice, with the only assurance of Faith.

- Then, from house to house, until Auteuil in 1857, from the first offering to the profession *until death*, in 1844 with *the vow to extend throughout our life the Kingdom of Jesus Christ*, from the first responsibility to superior for life in 1858, the word given constantly and always: *Lord, You know well that I love You.*

- From foundation to foundation, welcoming vocations and young students in new missions.

Through joys and sufferings, fidelity and defections, hours of fullness or of pain, friendships or misunderstandings, a certainty experienced:

Jesus, Founder of the Assumption... the only foundation stone on which we are built.

The earth, a place of glory for God and of mission for each one.

- Gradually, as the years pass and that one can reread history, an ever vibrant affirmation:

In the Assumption all is of Jesus Christ, All belongs to Jesus Christ, All must be for Jesus Christ.

- In the last days, as in the first, no longer in the energy of action and the attraction of contemplation, but in the interior unity brought about through detachment,

One only gaze: Jesus Christ and the extension of His Kingdom.

Marie Eugenie and Holiness or Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus :

The simple and joyful momentum sprung from the mystery of the Assumption.

A figure in the world of the 19th century,

A sign for the Church of today.

Sister Thérèse-Maylis

May 2011

2. SAINTS OF OUR COUNTRIES

2.1. In America

Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez

SALVADOR



Óscar Arnulfo Romero y Galdámez known as [Monsignor Romero](#) was a Salvadoran Catholic priest and the fourth Archbishop of San Salvador (1977-1980). He became famous for his preaching in defense of human rights and was assassinated in the exercise of his pastoral ministry. As Archbishop he denounced, during his Sunday homilies, the numerous violations of human rights and publicly manifested his solidarity for the victims of political violence in his country.

In 1994, the cause for his canonization was opened by his successor [Arturo Rivera y Damas](#). From this process, Monsignor Romero received the title Servant of God. Many in Latin America refer to him as **Saint Romero de América**. Romero is honored by other religious Christian denominations outside of the Catholic Church including the Anglican Communion which has included him in their list of Saints. He is one of the ten martyrs of the 20th century represented among the statues of Westminster Abbey in London and was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.

Childhood and Youth: Óscar A. Romero was born on 15 August 1917 in [Ciudad Barrios](#), Department of [San Miguel \(El Salvador\)](#). He was the second of 8 brothers, children of a marriage between a telegraph and a postal worker, Santos Romero y Guadalupe Galdámez. He was baptized on 11 May 1919, in

the parish church of his hometown. Since early childhood he had frail health, was withdrawn and quiet. Since his infancy he practiced nocturnal prayer and the veneration of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Ecclesiastical Career: In 1930, at the age of 13, he entered the minor seminary in the city of San Miguel which was run by the Claretian Fathers. Subsequently, in 1937 he entered the Seminary of San José de la Montaña of San Salvador. That same year he went to Rome where he continued his theological studies in the Pontifical Gregorian University. He was ordained a priest on 4 April 1942 at the age of 24. In Rome was a student of Monsignor Giovanni Batista Montini, (future Pope [Paul VI](#)).

He was appointed Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador in 1968. On 21 April 1970, Pope Paul VI named him Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador, receiving Episcopal ordination on 21 June 1970 from the hands of the Apostolic Nuncio Girolamo Prigrione. On 15 October [1974](#), he was named Bishop of the Diocese of [Santiago de María](#) in the Department of [Usulután](#). He held that post for two years. On February [1977](#), he was named Archbishop of San Salvador by Pope Paul VI, to succeed Monsignor [Luis Chávez y González](#).

Archbishopric: 1977

On [20 February](#), while the Archdiocese was preparing for the inauguration of the new Archbishop, the country was holding presidential elections. The opposition denounced wide-scale electoral fraud and convoked a rally in the [Plaza Libertad](#) of San Salvador. On 28 February, the government security forces violently dissolved this rally resulting in dozens of deaths and missing.

On [22 February](#), Monsignor Romero took over as Archbishop of San Salvador in a simple ceremony celebrated in the chapel of the Major Seminary of San José de la Montaña, attended by the Apostolic Nuncio Monsignor Emmanuelle Gerada and the other Bishops of El Salvador. On [5 March](#), during a special assembly of bishops, Monsignor Romero was elected Vice-President of the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador and a statement was prepared to denounce the persecution of the Church in the country.

On [12 March 1977](#), Fr. [Rutilio Grande](#), S. J., intimate friend of Monsignor Romero, was assassinated with two peasants in the city of [Aguilares](#). The

Archbishop responded to this assassination calling for the celebration of only one Mass to show the unity of his clergy.

1978-1979: At this time he began to change his preaching and went on to defend the rights of the defenseless. In his homilies, Monsignor Romero denounced the abuses against the rights of the peasants, workers, his priests, and all those who appealed to him, in the context of violence and military repression that the country was experiencing.

Assassination: On Monday 24th of March 1980 he was assassinated while celebrating Mass in the chapel of the Hospital of Divine Providence in the district of Miramonte de San Salvador. A shot fired by a sniper hit him in the heart just before the Consecration. The assassination of Monsignor Oscar Romero was executed by a death squad formed by the civilian and military far right and led by Major [Roberto d'Aubuisson](#), (founder of the [ARENA](#) Party)

He was 62 when assassinated. His mortal remains are in the crypt of the Metropolitan Cathedral of San Salvador.

On 12 May [1994](#) the Archdiocese of San Salvador asked the Holy See for permission to initiate the process of canonization. The diocesan process was completed in 1995 and the case was sent to the Congregation for the Cause of Saints in the Vatican who in 2000 transferred it to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (headed at that time by the German Cardinal [Joseph Ratzinger](#), the present Pope [Benedict XVI](#)) to thoroughly analyze the writings and homilies of Monsignor Romero. Once this analysis was completed in 1995, the Postulator for the cause of canonization, Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, informed the media of the study's conclusions: *"Romero was not a revolutionary bishop, but a man of the Church, of the Gospel and of the poor"*. The process will take new steps which, if superseded, could draw closer the date in which Óscar Arnulfo Romero will be elevated to the altars as the first saint and martyr of [El Salvador](#).

SISTER MARÍA ROMERO MENESES, FMA

NICARAGUA

Born in Granada (Nicaragua) on 13 January 1902, she died in Las Peñitas, León (Nicaragua) on 7 July 1977. Of Spanish origin, her parents were very rich and that is why she could expect a life of much comfort. In 1910, the missionaries of Don Bosco, the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians (FMA) arrived in Nicaragua. They were very poor, very good and always smiling and this was where the Holy Spirit inspired in her the vocation that would bring her to leave all for the Lord.



She made her vows in the Salesian Congregation of the FMA. In 1931, she was sent to the neighboring country of Central America, Costa Rica, where, for 46 years, she devoted herself to the most impoverished. Among her most important works we find the creation of the Casa

María Auxiliadora, a hostel for people who need solace. This hostel includes a clinic for the poor who have no social security and a school for street children. Casa Maín is also another work that welcomes young women living on the street.

"Con Maria Toda Para Todos Como Don Bosco" (With Maria, All for All like Don Bosco), the official biography of Sister Maria Romero, was written by Sister Domenica Grassiano, FMA.

Without pretending to being a writer, Sister María was accustomed to note in a small notebook she had since 1924 feelings harbored in her soul, phrases and thoughts of several religious authors such as St. John of the Cross, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Augustine, St. Teresa of Jesus, etc. A book "Spiritual Writings" compiles these notes.

She was made Venerable by Pope John Paul II on 18 December 2000 and her very much awaited beatification took place at Easter 2002.

The opening of the Diocesan process of Sister Maria Romero took place on 18 November 1988. During the years 1988 to 1992, sessions were held in which the witnesses called upon by the Tribunal for the Cause of Canonization presented their statements. This Tribunal was located in the Provincial House of the FMA in San José. The witnesses called to give evidence of the reputation of sanctity of Sister Maria Romero were 50, with 6 other ex-officio witnesses.

The tribunal held 90 sessions. There were also 40 sessions for the study of documents presented by the Vice Postulator to be included in the process concerning the Servant of God. The remains of Sister Maria Romero were transferred from Leon to San Jose, Costa Rica and buried in the General Cemetery of San Jose, where they lay until 9 November 1991. On that date they were transferred to a mausoleum built in the Casa de María Auxiliadora founded by her.

On 27 August 1968, the UMA (Union of American Women) named her "Woman of the Year". In 1976 the Rotary Club of Costa Rica awarded her a gold medal as acknowledgement.

For many she was fully a "Don Bosco" but of feminine gender. For her people she was a real Saint and all of Latin America, especially Nicaragua and Costa Rica celebrated with great joy the day of her beatification which took place on 14 April 2002 by Pope John Pablo II.

Saint Brother Pedro de Betancur

GUATEMALA



Pedro de Betancur was born on March 19th, 1626 in the city of Villaflor, Tenerife, Las Canarias, Spain.

On September 18, 1646 willing to bring the Gospel to the new Kingdom, he sailed to Honduras, made a stop in Cuba and waited for his journey to continue. At the end of 1650, when he was about to travel, he found out, by the passengers, that one ship was carrying goods to Guatemala. When he heard this

name, he said: *“After hearing its name, being this the first time I hear of it, I want to go to that city, because with joy and superior strength I feel leaned to walk towards it”*. After landing in Puerto Trujillo, Honduras, he immediately went to Guatemala.

He arrived to Santiago de los Caballeros, currently Antigua Guatemala on February 18, 1651. At the entrance, before passing by the bridge of the river Pensativo, he knelt, kissed the land, prayed a Salve, and with vehemence said: *“Here I will live and die”*. In that moment, a strong quake shook the city; it was the welcoming of this land to a new son, a son who already loved it with all his heart.

From September 4, 1651 until 1653, he dedicated to work as a weaver, giving an example of kindness and righteousness to everybody. That was the first mission field of Brother Pedro because there he improvised and became a catechist of the workers.

Before the spiritual and moral abandonment in which the slaves, prisoners, workers, and destitute children lived, Brother Pedro began to radiate light in the darkness of the city.

In 1652, wanting to be a priest, he began studying at College of San Lucas de la Society of Jesus, enduring adversity because he barely knew how to read and write. However, after three years of relentless efforts, his work was availed. For his sake, he was advised to leave the seminary because he was found unable for Latin.

Faded his priesthood project and without finding sense to continue living in Guatemala, he went to Petapa, currently Villa Canales, where an image of Virgin of the Rosary had a devoted worship. While he was praying, not knowing what to do with his life, he heard the following: *“Pedro”!* Go back to Guatemala City; it is there where God has appointed you for your spiritual work”. It was the voice of Mary. He placed all his confidence in her, she was his constant support, and it is her who, at the time of untold grief, opened the final path to his life.

Back in the city, he worked until June 1654 in the construction site of the Calvary, as a superintendent, doing so with willingness, humbleness and resignation. There, in 1655, he applied to be admitted in the Third Order of Penance of San Francisco. This was the place where he lived the vital moment

of his life because he discovered the real reason why God had brought him to Guatemala. He regained his joy and apostolic devotion.

He dedicated himself to the prayer and mortification for many hours a day and night, alternating other hours to charity throughout the city, dressed with a rough sackcloth and a hemp robe clung to his body with strings.

Later, in the middle of his constant prayers, he felt the desire to devote his life to the service of the needy. In 1664, he began the work and construction of the Our Lady of Bethlehem Hospital, which was ended in 1665.

When he saw many patients return to their homes without being fully cured, relapsing in their ailments and many dying, he decided to accommodate the convalescents in the hospital, personally attending their spiritual and physical needs, with such tenderness that soon they would be completely recovered and could return to their work quite healthy.

Thereafter, day after day he traveled along the streets of Guatemala, with three inseparable companions: a cane, a bell, and a hat. The cane to walk, the bell to raise awareness and raise his hat to aid for his patients. On the ancient streets of the city it resounded the singing of his bell, while concerned about the salvation of the souls, he would constantly proclaim: "Remember that we have one soul only and if we lose it, we do not recover it".

When the hospital began growing he realized that it needed to be attended by a religious community to focus on prayer, penance and service to the poorest. That was the beginning of the Order of the Bethlehemites. The first constitutions of the congregation were approved on August 20, 1667 and confirmed on January 25, 1668.

He was a pioneer in the Americas. He founded a school for children who wandered in the streets with no one caring about them. At the same time he founded an oratory, a school, and a hospital; catechizing, teaching and healing all those who were at the reach of his kindness.

In 1665, he obtained the permission from the Bishop to change his surname, as usually the religious did and from that moment be called Pedro de San José Betancur.

In Advent, when Christmas approached, he would make a nativity scene and carry an image of Child Jesus throughout the streets, exhorting people to prepare for the festivities with prayers, fasts and good work. On Christmas night, the parishioners gathered around the Hospital of Nuestra Señora de Belén for a solemn procession, carrying on biers the images of Saint Joseph

and Mary dressed as pilgrims, celebrations that Brother Pedro held until his death. Nowadays the religious tradition continues, known as the “posadas”. Brother Pedro was a healthy man; however, the contact with patients, his constant fasts and vigils, his blood disciplines and nocturnal wanderings against sin, especially in very cold nights walking barefoot and without a coat, all prejudicial to his physical constitution, caused him a pneumonia that led him to his death.

Finally, after an arduous and successful passage through this land of exile, with his hands full of spiritual fruit to offer to the Creator, he sweetly slept in the arms of Him whom he served his entire life to, at two in the afternoon on April 25, 1667. He was 41 years old, 16 of them here in Guatemala. In fulfillment to his desire he was buried in the Church of Señor San Francisco el Grande.

On July 25, 1771, His Holiness Pope Clement XIV decreed that Brother Pedro had practiced the theological and moral virtues to a heroic degree, and declared him Venerable.

On June 22, 1980, His Holiness Pope John Paul II, on behalf of the Church, recognized the sanctity of Brother Pedro, declaring him blessed.

The Decree for the Canonization of Blessed Brother Pedro de San José de Betancur, was presented on July 7, 2001, in the Vatican City, before the Holy Father John Paul II. On February 2, 2002, in the city of Antigua Guatemala, was officially launched the book "The writings of Brother Pedro".

On July 30, 2002, during its third Apostolic Visit to Guatemala, His Holiness Pope John Paul II celebrated Holy Eucharist for the Canonization of Blessed Brother Pedro de San José de Betancur, an event of incalculable pastoral and ecclesial value for Guatemala and America.

For the history, Brother Pedro died many years ago, but his spirit lives on, especially in the social programs that bear his name, charity institutions and human promotion.

THE LORD'S PRAYER OF HERMANO PEDRO

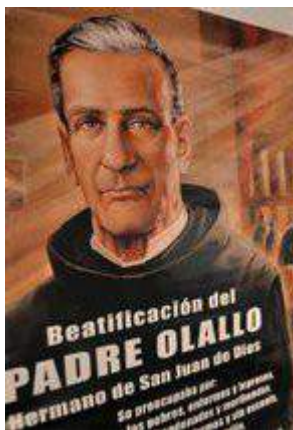
*Our Father who art in heaven: deliver me from all duels.
Hallowed be thy name: may God make me a good man in everything.*

*Thy kingdom come: Lord, deliver me from the pains of hell.
Thy will be done: may I serve you with total truth.
Give us our daily bread; may I serve everyone with joy.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors:
I forgive all by the God of my love.
Lead us not into temptation; Lord delivers us from evil:
Oh! God help us to serve all
Not to rule anyone, and in life sin no more.*

Blessed José Olallo Valdés,

Religious of the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God

CUBA



Blessed José Olallo Valdés was born in La Habana Cuba, on 12 February 1820. Son of unknown parents, he was entrusted to the “Casa Cuna San José de La Habana”, where he was baptized on the same day 15 March 1820. He lived and was educated in the same “Casa Cuna” until the age of 7, and then in “Beneficencia”, manifesting himself as a serious and responsible boy.

Between the ages of 13-14, he entered the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God in the community of the Hospital of Saints Philip and James in La Habana. Overcoming the obstacles that seemed to block his vocation, he remained firm in his decision resulting in his profession as a religious hospitaller.

In April 1835 he was assigned to the city of de Puerto Príncipe (today Camagüey), joining the community of the Hospital of San Juan de Dios where he devoted the rest of his life serving the sick in the style of St. John of God. In

the 54 years there he absented himself only one night from the hospital for reasons beyond his will. He went from Assistant Infirmarian at the age of 25, to Head Infirmarian of the hospital and then, in 1856 to Superior of the Community.

He faced great sacrifices and difficulties but always with honesty and much energy. His life dedicated to hospitality was not affected at the time of the suppression of the Religious Orders by the liberal Spanish governments even if it involved the confiscation of Church property. From 1876, in which the last brother of the Community died, until the date of his own death in 1889, though alone, he continued to take care of the sick with the same magnanimity, always faithful to God, to his conscience, to his vocation and to the charism, humble and obedient, with nobility of heart, respecting, serving and loving even the ungrateful, the enemies and the envious without ever abandoning his religious vows. During the 10 years of war (1868-1878) he showed himself full of courage for those under his care, always working prudently and ungrudgingly in favor of all but with preference for the weakest and the poorest, for the elderly, the orphans and the slaves.

He yielded to the demands of the military authorities to convert the hospital into a blood center for their soldiers while continuing to welcome the neediest among the civilian population without distinction of ideology, race or religion. During the most difficult times and situations of the armed conflicts, putting his own life in danger, he assisted, with “gentle firmness”, the prisoners and the wounded regardless of their social or political origin, defending even those who had no permission from the government to be cared for, not allowing himself to be intimidated by threats nor prohibitions and obtaining for all this the respect and the consideration from the military authorities themselves. Before said authorities he was also able to intercede on behalf of the people of Camagüey in a moment of tension and danger, avoiding a civil slaughter. Persevering in his vocation, through his gentle and serene kindness, he took the fourth vow of hospitality proper of the Religious of Saint John of God, not only a ministry of love and service towards the sick but also a way of ardent apostolate excelling in assistance to the dying and agonizing whom he accompanied during the last hours in their journey towards a better life.

He always stood out for his infinite goodness, being called “apostle of charity” and “father of the poor”, which perfectly summarize the heroic witnessing of Blessed Olallo. Modest, sober, devoid of aspirations of any kind except that of

being devoted solely to his ministry of mercy, he waived the priesthood and was characterized by his humanitarian spirit and competence in health care, even as a self-taught physician-surgeon.

He lived far from the acclamations, fleeing honors so as to be able to fix his gaze only on Jesus Christ Whom he saw in the features of those who were suffering. His humility, in fidelity to his charism, was shown in his waiver of the priesthood when invited by his Archbishop because his vocation was the service of the sick and of the poor. The witnesses finally speak of his total loyalty to his religious consecration in the practice of the vows of obedience, chastity, poverty and hospitality. His death on March 7, 1889 was considered as the “death of a just man”. At his death, wake, funeral and burial, with the monument-mausoleum erected later by public subscription, they expressed reverence and veneration towards their admired protector. From then on his grave will be visited continuously. He had died but would remain alive in the heart of the people who will keep calling him “Father Olallo”. The popular reputation for holiness that surrounded him stemmed from his life as a modest, just and generous man, as a model of virtue with a heart burning with love for “my preferred brothers”: frugal, joyful, affable, but above all exalted servant of charity. Blessed Olallo knew how to be a faithful follower of his Founder. God was his life and as a consequence, enlightened by the love of God, gave love for love. “God occupied the first place in his intentions and in his works: his eyes fixed on the good, he carried Jesus constantly in his soul”. This heroic charity had its foundation in a faith that recognized “God as his Father and Jesus as the center of his life, the foundation of his service of love and of his mercy. Jesus Crucified was the secret of his fidelity to God’s love that motivated each of his works”. Even if he was of a tenacious spirit, he was always docile to God’s plan to better address and sustain the harsh and daily tasks required by hospital work and the difficult and delicate situations that involved risks to his life, always seeking the good of his patients.

Following the death of Father Olallo, his fame for holiness increased every day especially among the people of Camagüey, who attributed graces and continued support to his intercession. In 1990, the centenary of his death, the Process on the study of the cause for his holiness opened in the Diocese of Camagüey, Cuba, which recognized his heroic virtues on the 16th of December 2006. Similarly, after the celebration of the Diocesan process on an alleged miracle in favor of the healing of a 3 year old girl, Daniela Cabrera Ramos, in the same Diocese of Camagüey, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI recognized it

as a real miracle in his Decree of 15 March 2008. The Beatification ceremony of Father Olallo Valdés took place in the city of Camagüey, Cuba, on 29 November 2008, presided by His Eminence Cardinal José Saraiva Martins.

Saint Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga

CHILE



Birth [22 January 1901](#) at [Viña del Mar, Chile](#)

Death [18 August 1952](#) in [Santiago, Chile](#)

Beatification [16 October 1994](#)

Canonization [23 October 2005](#)

Feast Day [18 August](#)

Alberto Hurtado Cruchaga, born in Viña del Mar, Chile, on January 22, 1901, lost his father when he was 4. His mother was forced to sell their modest property to pay off family debts. As a result, Alberto and his brother had to go live with relatives and often moved from one to the other. So, since childhood, he experienced the condition of the poor, homeless and dependent on others. A scholarship enabled him to study at the Saint Ignatius College of Santiago. He became a member of the Marian Congregation (today known as the Communities of Christian Living CVX) and as such he strongly interested himself in the poor going to the most miserable neighborhoods to work with them every Sunday afternoon.

He wanted to become a Jesuit when he finished High School in 1917 but was advised to postpone the realization of his desire to be able to take care of his

mother and of his younger brother. Working in the evenings he was able to support them and at the same time study at the Faculty of Law at the Catholic University. During this time he continued to dedicate himself to the poor whom he continued to visit each week. Military service made him interrupt his studies but he was able to graduate at the beginning of August 1923.

On the 14th of that month he entered the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Chillán, Chile. In 1925 he was assigned to Córdoba, Argentina.

In 1927 he was sent to Spain for his Philosophy and Theology studies. However, the expulsion of the Jesuits from this country in 1931 obliged him to leave for Belgium and continue his theology in Louvain. He was ordained a priest there on the 24th of August 1933. In 1935 he obtained his doctorate in Pedagogy and Psychology. After his Tertianship in Drongen (Belgium), he returned to Chile in 1936.

Back in his homeland, his apostolic zeal gradually extended to all fields. He began his activity as professor of Religion in the Saint Ignatius College and of Pedagogy in the Catholic University and the Pontifical Seminary. He wrote several articles on education and on Christian Social Order. He built a Center of the Spiritual Exercises in a town that now bears his name. He was director of the Marian Congregation of the youth of the college whom he invited to be catechists in local areas. He gave the Spiritual Exercises countless times. He was spiritual director of many young people often accompanying several in their response to a priestly vocation and contributing significantly to the formation of many lay Christians.

In 1941 he published his most famous book: "Is Chile A Catholic Country?". He was named Adviser of the Youth of Catholic Action of the Archdiocese of Santiago that same year and of the whole nation the following year. He fulfilled his task with extraordinary spirit of initiative, dedication and sacrifice.

In October 1944, while he was preaching a retreat, he felt impelled to appeal to his audience regarding the plight of the poor in the city and especially of many children living on the streets. This evoked a ready and generous response. It was the beginning of an initiative that made Father Hurtado better known - the form of charitable activity that helps homeless giving them not only a place to live but a real home: the ***Home of Christ***.

Through contributions from benefactors and with the active collaboration of committed laity, Father Hurtado opened the first shelter for children, then one for women and another for men. In the Home of Christ, the poor began to experience a family atmosphere. These houses were multiplied and acquired new forms and characteristics: in some cases they became rehabilitation centers; in others, trade schools and many others of fraternal and merciful hospitality. Everything was inspired by Christian values which imbued the entire work.

In 1945, Father Hurtado went to the United States to see how he could adapt the movement “Boys Town” in his country. He dedicated the final years of his life to the different ways in which the Home of Christ had come to exist and operate.

In 1947 he founded the Chilean Trade Union Association (ASICH), with the aim of promoting trade unions inspired by the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Between 1947 and 1950 he wrote three important books: *Trade Unionism*, *Social Humanism* and *Social Christian Order in the Documents of the Catholic Hierarchy*. In 1951 he founded the well-known journal of the Chilean Jesuits, *Messenger*, dedicated to making known and explaining the doctrine of the Church.



A pancreatic cancer ended his life in a few months. In the midst of great pain he used to repeat: ***“(I’m) happy, Lord, (I’m) happy”***.

After having spent his life demonstrating the love of Christ to the poor, he was called by Christ on the 18th of August 1952.

Since returning to Chile he lived a little over fifteen years. It was a time of intensive apostolate, a deep expression of his personal love for Christ and, for that reason, characterized by a strong commitment to poor and abandoned children, an ardent zeal for the formation of the laity and by a lively sense of Christian social justice.

Father Hurtado was beatified by John Paul II on October 16, 1994 and canonized by Benedict XVI on October 23, 2005.

Saint TERESA of the ANDES

ECUADOR



SAINT TERESA OF JESUS "OF THE ANDES" (Juanita Fernández Solar) is the first Chilean and the first American Carmelite that has attained the honors of the altar. She was born in Santiago de Chile on July 13, 1900, in a very wealthy Christian family. Her parents were Miguel Fernández and Lucía Solar.

From the age of 6 she would go almost daily to Mass with her mother and longed to receive Communion which she did for the first time on September 11, 1910. Since then she tried to go to Communion daily and to spend a long time in friendly dialogue with Jesus.

From her childhood she also lived an intense Marian life which was one of the strong foundations of her spiritual life. Knowledge and love of the Mother of God vivified and sustained every moment of her journey in the following of Christ.

She studied at the Sacred Heart College (1907 - 1918). Deeply affective, she thought herself incapable of living away from her family. Yet, she generously assumed the trial of studying in a boarding school the last three years of her studies as training for the final separation which took place on May 7, 1919 when she entered the Discalced Carmelites of The Andes.

When she was 14, the Lord told her that He wanted her heart for Him alone, also calling her to become a Carmelite. To prepare herself for this, she read the lives of the Carmelite Saints and corresponded with the Prioress of The Andes. At 17 she expressed her Carmelite ideal “to suffer and pray” and ardently defended her contemplative life that the world “sees as useless”. She was thrilled to know that her sacrifice would serve to enhance and purify the world.

As a Carmelite she was called Teresa of Jesus. She did not get to live one whole year in the Convent. She died on the 12th of April 1920. The Sisters claimed that she was already a saint when she entered. So, she was able, in a short time, to finish the race towards holiness that she had begun in earnest long before her First Communion.

"Christ, that Man crazy with love, has made me crazy", she would say. Her enthusiasm and her constant endeavor were to resemble Him, to be configured to Christ. That is why, desiring to be His excellent copy, she lived decided to go to the end of the world even through fire were it necessary so as to be faithful to Him. She was always ready to serve and sanctify herself for others especially in joy and happiness to make virtue pleasant and attractive.

Her life was entirely normal and balanced. She attained an enviable maturity integrating in a very harmonious synthesis the divine and the human: prayer, studies, household duties...and sport, which she enjoyed very much especially swimming and horseback riding.

As a beautiful, charming, athletic, joyful, balanced, helpful and responsible young girl, Teresa of The Andes is in the best of situations to draw the youth towards Christ and to remind us all that it is necessary to fulfill the Evangelical Plan of love so as to be fulfilled as persons.

Through her intercession the Lord is pouring a downpour of graces and favors of all kinds and drawing to Himself countless prodigal children. Her shrine, visited by more than a hundred thousand pilgrims each month, has become the spiritual center of Chile.

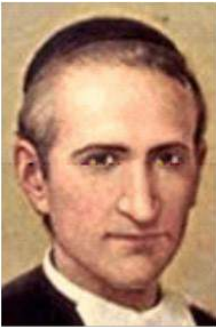
Thus Teresa of The Andes is fulfilling the mission for which she was already recognized shortly after her death: to awaken hunger and thirst for God in our materialistic world.

Beatified by John Paul II in Santiago de Chile on April 3, 1987, she was solemnly canonized by the same Supreme Pontiff in Rome on March 21, 1993.

February 9

Saint Miguel Febres Cordero, *religious*

Second Ecuadorian Saint



In 1863 the Brothers of the Christian Schools opened a school in Cuenca (Ecuador). Among the first students was Francisco Febres Cordero, born on 7 November 1854. The Christian education began in his family received a new impetus and development thanks above all to the catechism lessons and the example of the educators. In this way we see how the La Sallian vocation is soon to dawn in the open spirit of the young Ecuadorian. The opposition from his parents who wanted him to become a priest does not discourage him. Francisco, who from his most tender years confided to the Virgin all his pains, finds in her the strength to continue onward in his intention. On March 24, 1868 he enters the novitiate of the Brothers. It is the vigil of the feast of the Annunciation. Upon receiving the habit of the Brothers, Francisco receives the name Brother Miguel.

Brother Miguel begins his apostolate in the La Salle schools of Quito. The young professor excels in the teaching of Spanish language and literature and in the absence of appropriate manuals and textbooks, decides to compose his own.

In him also shine, with Evangelical simplicity, all the virtues proper to religious life: poverty, chastity and obedience. Above them all, charity radiates nurtured in the Eucharist and in devotion to the Virgin.

Pope John Paul II, placing this Ecuadorian religious among the Saints, offers the Universal Church and especially the Church of Ecuador, the model of a learned but simple and humble religious, of a catechist totally committed to the work of evangelization, of an educator who has helped so many youth and children to find meaning in life in Jesus and to live their faith as gift and commitment.

Homily of Pope John Paul II during the Canonization of Saint Miguel Febres Cordero. Rome, 21 October 1984

Faithful Servant to the Call of God

Since the early years, our new saint was prepared by a special grace that drew him almost irresistibly to share life with his religious teachers, the Brothers of the Christian Schools who had come to Ecuador a few years back. More than one member of his family felt it a duty to oppose himself to this project.

The young Miguel had to endure rejection and then had to endure for several years an extremely cold attitude from his father who was, however, a sincere Christian. The young Miguel had absolutely no doubt about his divine calling.

Faithful from the outset to the call of God, Saint Miguel Febres Cordero will continue to live it without the slightest hesitation during his forty years of religious and apostolic life.

And, as the prophet had promised, God *put his words in his mouth* and opened a path before him in the hearts of those who drew near to him. The Crucifix reigned over his existence and his occupations: in the classroom, at his desk, as well as in the chapel and the different communities, his gaze often went towards the image of the Divine Crucified.

The new Saint Brother Miguel Febres Cordero participated in a heroic way in the sufferings of Christ Crucified. Among the various crosses he had to carry during his life, not the least among them, was the malformation of his feet that caused him considerable pain when walking. But he drew strength from weakness, from pain, a reason for joy making the *language of the cross*, scandal and foolishness for those who refuse to accept Christ Crucified as Lord and Savior, his life. The joyful acceptance of his cross was for all, reason for edification and Christian example first in his native Ecuador and then in Europe particularly in Premia de Mar, where he spent the last years of his life. His joy in suffering awakened in his community, among the students and in all those who dealt with him, a deep respect and admiration. This was clear proof that he had deeply assimilated the Pauline teaching: *God's weakness is stronger than men*.

At the same time he welcomed everyone simply and warmly. Following the example of Christ, Brother Miguel generously visited the poor and the needy, mentored the young, taught children, gave himself to all. From the

Cross of Christ – the highest expression of love for man – he drew strength and inspiration to give himself unreservedly to other even at his own expense. On the 19th of February 1888 he was present at the Basilica of Saint Peter participating at the Beatification of Venerable John Baptist de La Salle, founder of the Christian Schools.

With what love and dedication did this “apostle of the school” give himself to thousands of children and youth who passed through his classrooms during the long years of his life as an educator!

We can therefore say that the exemplary itinerary of his life as teacher is a valid model for Christian educators today as well as a stimulus to value the great importance of the apostolate and the ideals of Catholic Education that aims at offering the new generations a solid education enlightened by the Gospel.

I beg God Almighty, through the intercession of Saint Miguel Febres Cordero to pour out the abundance of His gift over all his dear children of Ecuador and to give all his Brothers in religion a new impetus, joy and enthusiasm to continue faithfully the path which, following those of Christ, this good son of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and of the Church admirably traced. Amen.

Prayer

*Oh God, who raised up Saint Brother Miguel in Ecuadorian lands
so that through his educative and catechetical work
he may show children the path that leads to You,
grant that his example may help us follow Jesus Christ, our Master,
so that we may reach, with our brothers,
the glory of your Kingdom. Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord....*

Saint JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATOATZIN (1474 – 1548)

MEXICO



WITNESS AND MESSENGER OF THE VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE

(from December 9 to 12, 1531)

BEATIFIED ON MAY 6, 1990 BY JOHN PAUL II

CANONIZED ON JULY 31, 2002 BY JOHN PAUL II

FIRST INDIGENOUS MEXICAN TO BE CANONIZED

According to oral tradition, continuous and uninterrupted, and according to various historical documents such as Nican Mopohua and Nican Motecpana among others, on December 1531 the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego took place, an extraordinary encounter. Juan Diego was a mature man, who had been baptized some time before by the first Franciscan missionaries. He belonged to the indigenous group called “Chichimecas” from Texcoco. Juan Diego, a “macehualli”, that is someone not belonging to any of the social categories of the Empire. Why did the Virgin appear before him?

THE APPARITIONS

Ten years after the conquest of Mexico, on December 9th, 1531, Juan Diego was going towards the Convent of Tlaltelolco to attend Mass. At dawn, he got to the foot of the Tepeyac. Suddenly, he heard some music that seemed like the song of thousands of birds. Very surprised he stopped, raised his eyes to the top of the hill and saw that it glowed with a strange light. The music stopped and he heard a sweet voice proceeding from the top of the hill, calling him: “Juanito, dear Juan Dieguito”. Juan rushed up and when he got to the top he saw the Blessed Virgin Mary in the middle of a rainbow, attired with heavenly splendor. Her beauty and kindness filled his heart with infinite joy, while he listened to the tender words that she spoke to him. She spoke in náhuatl. She told him she was the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of the True God. She revealed to him how it was her most cherished desire to have a temple built there, where, as a pious mother, she would show all her love and kindness to him and his and whoever requested her protection. “And in order to carry out my wish, you will go to the house of the Bishop of Mexico and you will tell him that I send you to pass on to him my vehement wish: that I want a temple built here on this plain. You will tell him what you have seen and admired, and what you have heard. You can be sure that I will appreciate your action and will pay you back, because I will make you happy and you will deserve a compensation for your hard work and tiredness, as you do what I ask. You have heard my order, my son, my little one: go and put all your effort”.

Juan bowed before her and told her: “My lady: I am off to comply with your order; farewell to you, I am your humble servant”.

When Juan arrived in Bishop Zumárraga’s house and was taken to his presence, he told him everything that the Mother of God had revealed to him. But the Bishop seemed to doubt his words, asking him to come back another day in order to listen to him more slowly.

That same day he went back to the top of the hill and found the Blessed Virgin who was waiting for him. With tears of sadness he told her how he had failed in his mission. She asked him to go back to see the Bishop the next day. Juan Diego did as the Blessed Virgin ordered. This time he was more successful. The Bishop asked for a sign.

Juan Diego returned to the hill and gave the message to Holy Mary and she promised to give him a sign the next morning. But Juan Diego could not carry out this order because an uncle of his, called Juan Bernardino, fell very seriously sick.

Two days later, on the 12th of December, Juan Bernardino was dying and Juan Diego rushed to fetch a priest from Tlaltelolco. He reached the side of the hill and chose to go by the eastern side in order to avoid the Blessed Virgin. He wanted first to attend to his uncle.

With great surprise he saw her come down and meet him on his way. Juan apologized for not having been able to come the previous day. After she heard Juan Diego's words, she responded: "Listen and understand, my son, my little one, that nothing should be scaring and distressing you. Do not let your heart be disturbed, do not be afraid of that or any other illness or anguish. Am I not here with you, me, your mother? Aren't you under my shadow? Am I not your health? What else do you need? Do not be distressed by your uncle's illness, he will not die now; you can be sure that he has already been healed".

When Juan Diego heard these words he felt joyful. He pleaded to have him dispatched to see the Bishop in order to take him the sign and proof he had requested in order to believe him. She told him:

"Go up, my son, my little one, to the top of the hill where you saw me and I gave you my orders; you will find different kinds of flowers; cut them, pick them and right away come down and bring them to my presence".

Juan Diego climbed the hill and, when he reached the top, he was amazed that he found such beautiful flowers. On their fragrant petals, the night's dew seemed like precious pearls. Immediately, he started cutting them, picked them and took them before the Virgin. She took the flowers in her hands, arranged them on his "tilma" and said: "My son, my little one, here you have the sign that you must take to the Bishop. You will tell him on my behalf to see in it my will and that he has to comply with it. You are my very trustful ambassador. I rigorously order you that only before the Bishop should you unfold your "tilma" and show what you have in it".

When Juan Diego was before the Bishop, he gave him Holy Mary's signal extending his "tilma", the precious flowers falling to the floor; and on the "tilma", amazingly painted, appeared the Image of Holy Mary, as it is seen today, and kept in her sacred house. Bishop Zumárraga, together with his family and servants who were around, felt a great emotion, they could not believe what they were witnessing, a most beautiful Image of the Virgin, the Mother of God, the Lady of Heaven. They venerated her as something heavenly. The Bishop "with tears, with sadness, begged her, apologized to her for not having realized her will, her venerable breath, her venerable word."

And when the Bishop stood up, he untied Juan Diego's "tilma", where the Heavenly Queen had appeared. Afterwards, he placed it in his

oratory. Juan Diego spent the day at the Bishop's home and the next day the Bishop said: "Come and show us where the Queen of Heaven wants her temple built."

Juan Diego definitely gave himself to the service of Holy Mary of Guadalupe, and he was very sorry to be so distant from his home and people. He wanted to be near her every day, sweeping the temple (which was an honor for the indigenous), transmitting what he had seen and heard, and praying with great devotion. For this reason, Juan Diego begged the Bishop to be able to stay within the temple's walls. The Bishop, who cared for Juan Diego, agreed to his request and allowed him to live next to the Temple of the Lady of Heaven, in a small house built for this purpose.

Juan Diego was a humble person, with a religious force that engaged all his life; he left his lands and home to live in a poor hut, next to the Temple; he dedicated his life completely to the service of the temple of his beloved Child of Heaven, the Virgin Holy Mary of Guadalupe, who had requested that temple to offer her consolation and maternal love to all men. Juan Diego constructed with his testimony and word; actually, people went to him to intercede for their needs, make petitions and implorations. Juan Diego never lost an opportunity to narrate the way in which his marvelous encounter with the Virgin of Guadalupe had occurred, and the privilege of having been the Virgin's messenger. The town people recognized and venerated him as a true saint; the indigenous even had him as a model for their children and did not doubt to call him "Saint".

Te-coa-tla-xope, in the Náhuatl tongue, means "she will crush the stone serpent". The Spaniards heard the word, it sounded like "of Guadalupe" to them. They were surprised by this name that sounded like Spanish to them, but the beloved children of America knew better, they knew well the sense of the phrase in their native language. This is how the image and sanctuary acquired the name of Guadalupe, title that they have had for more than four centuries. HIS FEAST IS ON DECEMBER 9.

Saint Katharine Drexel, foundress and friend

USA



These 1927 photos of Mother Drexel offer a little insight into the breadth and depth of the vision of an American saint. At a time when Native American peoples and African Americans were basically ignored by both the U.S. Church in particular and American society as a whole, Katharine Drexel, a Philadelphia-born heiress, took a stand on their behalf.

Born in 1858, five years before the Emancipation Proclamation which freed the slaves of the South during the U.S. Civil War, Katharine grew up in a very wealthy and devout family. Her own mother, Hannah, died very early in Katharine's life, but she was fortunate to be given a stepmother, Emma Bouvier, who cared for Francis Drexel's children in many different ways, including developing their sense of responsibility for the poor. She regularly led them in providing food, clothing and medicines to immigrant families



crammed together in some of Philadelphia's poorest neighborhoods. These experiences shaped Katharine's life.

The American Church was busy at this time proving that it could "take care of its own"—most of whom were immigrants like those Katharine visited with her stepmother. It was a time of bricks and mortar, a time of building schools and

hospitals and churches for the millions who had come to "the Promised Land." But early on, Katharine found herself thinking about people excluded from the Promise, ignored by the Church and disdained by society: African-Americans and Native Americans. When her father died and left her and her two sisters \$14,000,000, she began to use her share to support the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions for the construction and staffing of schools for Native American children. This cause became her life's passion; eventually, it was joined by a great desire to educate and include African-Americans as well.

In 1878, during a private audience with Pope Leo XIII, she begged him to send missionary priests to serve the Indians. He responded, "Why not become a missionary yourself?"

She had thought she'd been discerning a contemplative vocation, but after this conversation, she turned her face toward the apostolic life. Katharine Drexel's decision to enter religious life and to devote herself to these particular peoples didn't go unnoticed in the press. Headlines screamed: **"Gives Up Seven Million!"** But in fact, she had given up something more than seven million dollars. She had realized that she had to give her whole self. A journal notation suggests her inner struggle as she sought to answer this call. *"Resolve: Generously and with no half-hearted, timorous dread of the opinions of Church and men to manifest my mission. . . . You have no time to occupy your thought with that complacency or consideration of what others will think. Your business is simply: 'What will my Father in heaven think?'"*

In 1891, she was professed as the first member of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. Within the year, ten others had joined her.

Katharine made the vow of poverty, but continued to administer the income from the trust fund – at that time, the enormous sum of \$400,000 a year. She could have used some of the money to endow her congregation, but she insisted that the sisters live on alms. The money was all to go to projects of service to Indians and blacks. By the time of her death, in 1955, she was personally responsible for establishing 145 Catholic missions and 12 schools for Indians, and 50 schools for black children. She was also instrumental in founding Xavier University in New Orleans, the first Catholic institute of higher learning founded for African Americans.

The website of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters has this to say about Katharine's spirituality – her contemplation in action:

In her quiet way, Katharine combined prayerful and total dependence on Divine Providence with determined activism. Her joyous incisiveness, attuned to the Holy Spirit, penetrated obstacles and facilitated her advances for social justice. Through the prophetic witness of Katharine Drexel's initiative, the Church in the United States was enabled to become aware of the grave domestic need for an apostolate among Native Americans and Afro-Americans. She did not hesitate to speak out against injustice, taking a public stance when racial discrimination was in evidence. Katharine left a four-fold dynamic legacy to her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, who continue her apostolate today:

- ♦ her love for the Eucharist, her spirit of prayer, and her Eucharistic perspective on the unity of all peoples;

- ◆ her undaunted spirit of courageous initiative in addressing social iniquities among minorities — one hundred years before such concern aroused public interest in the United States;
- ◆ her belief in the importance of quality education for all, and her efforts to achieve it;
- ◆ her total giving of self, of her inheritance and all material goods in selfless service of the victims of injustice.

Mother Drexel died on March 3, 1955, at the dawn of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. While her charitable works may have done little to challenge the prevailing racism of the times, they had profound "witness value," nevertheless. Fr. Augustus Tolton, the only black priest in America during the 1890s, said as much in a letter to her soon after the foundation: *"In the whole history of the Church in America we cannot find one person that has sworn to give her treasure for the sole benefit of the Colored and Indians. As I stand alone as the first Negro priest of America, so you, Mother Katharine, stand alone as the first one to make such a sacrifice for the cause of a downtrodden race."*

Katharine Drexel was canonized by Pope John Paul II on October 1, 2000. Her feast day is celebrated throughout the United States on March 3.

For more information, you can visit the website:

<http://www.katharinedrexel.org/index.html>

2.4. In Africa

Blessed Marie Clementine Anuarite Nengapeta

D. R. CONGO



Who is Anuarite? Blessed Marie Clementine ANUARITE NENGAPETA was born in WAMBA (Eastern Province) in 1941. Baptized at an early age, she became Alphonsine. Since her youth, Anuarite has been initiated to prayer by her maternal grandmother. She also taught her how to respect the poor and the aged. Later, it was by helping the elderly and the sick that she heard God’s call. She felt that God called her to serve Him in the religious life. Anuarite entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family at the age of 15 after her parents divorced. Three years later, she pronounced her vows and took the name Clémentine. From that moment on she entered into an intimate relationship with Christ through visits to the Blessed Sacrament. She put herself at the service of Jesus by catechizing the children. Her love for Mary led her to meditate and to pray the rosary every day. The imitation of Mary was her strength in the total giving of herself to Jesus. This intimate relationship with the mother of the great “Yes” helped her give value to her virginity and to serve others with simplicity.

The Martyrdom of Anuarite

Four years after the independence of the RDC, a rebellion broke out in the northeast of the country. Thousands of people died. The rebels invaded the convent of the Sisters in BAFWABAKA, in the Northeastern Province. The obliged the Sisters of the Holy Family to get into their truck and brought them to an unknown destination. The rebels made them undergo physical and psychological tortures. They endured mockeries and profanities for Christ. Having arrived at ISIRO, in the Eastern Province, the Sisters were harassed by

their tormentors. Anuarite refused to give in to the advances of Coronel OLOMBE. She wanted to remain faithful to her commitment to the end. She said: *“I do not want to commit this sin. You may kill me if you wish. I forgive you because you do not know what you are doing”*. Struck by the butt of a rifle and hit by bayonets which pierced her chest several times, she would say with her last breath: ***“That is how I wanted it”***. Anuarite died a martyr in fidelity to her love for Christ to Whom she had given her whole being. She forgave her tormentors before dying. It was in 1985, during the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Congo – Zaire at the time – that she would be beatified.

Anuarite, Model of Fidelity

Anuarite is from then on, in the Church of Congo and in the universal Church, a model of fidelity to Christ. Her motto was: *“To serve and please”*. There is today in the DRC a movement of Catholic Action called: *“Kizito-Anuarite”* which gathers together children and youth aged 7-15 for whom Anuarite is the Patron Saint. This movement was born in 1982 with the goal of initiating children to an intimate life with Christ and to fidelity to commitments made. The girls in this movement are called *“Anuarite”*. They made their own the motto of the Blessed *“Love and please”*. The Anuarites have their principles and laws which guide them in their fidelity to Christ. Some of these principles are: piety, obedience, purity, truth, love and perseverance.

The testimony of an Anuarite.

“My name is MONKANGO Divine (12 years old). I am a student at the Mpiko High School. It is now four years that I am an Anuarite. What made me join this movement was the joy that radiates from the faces of the Anuarites. Prayer, song and dance also attracted me to them. Since my integration into the movement, I have been struck by the welcome showed to me by the framers, a warm welcome. Among the activities of the group aside from formation, I chose to join the choir and I find my joy in singing for God because I know I have a beautiful voice. I discovered the life of Anuarite. I have also learned to help my parents, the poor and to wish the good of others. My joy at remaining an Anuarite is the purity of my Patroness until martyrdom, refusing to submit her body to the rebels, choosing to remain a virgin and to die for Jesus.

I also love our slogans:

- 1. Our salvation is in the life of Christ,*
- 2. Faith and Goodness,*

3. *Useful for society,*

4. *Always friends of truth. All this makes me live in joy, happy to be an Anuarite, of one day becoming a religious like Anuarite and live in fidelity."*

Anuarite is given to religious as a model of respect and fidelity to their commitment to the following of Christ. The Church in DRC solemnly celebrates her feast on 01 December. Cardinal Laurent MONSENGWO PASINYA the actual Archbishop of Kinshasa placed his Office as Cardinal under the patronage of Blessed Anuarite.

Prayer

O God, strength of our weakness, you revealed to men the wonders of your grace in the person of Blessed Marie Clementine ANUARITE NENGAPETA who shed her blood out of love for Christ. We still journey on the path of the Cross.

Grant us through her example and her intercession, the salutary help and comfort that we may come to the glory of the Resurrection.



Head of State and Saint?

TANZANIA

Is a Catholic Saint Concealed Within the Ranks of African Head of States?

A Positive Answer from Tanzania as the Beatification Process of Servant of God Julius Nyerere has opened!

In a time when certain parts of the African population attempt to get rid of some of their leaders (sometimes successfully so), it is most appropriate to remember the fact that there is another story about a population which is most grateful for the leadership qualities attached to its leader. May Nyerere continue to inspire some sincere leaders to selflessly dedicate themselves to the service of their people! It could be that the salvation of a whole continent depends on these.

Excerpts from Fr. Laurenti Magesa's
(Tanzanian theologian of St. Augustine University)

The Hidden Face of Mwalimu Nyerere

Why has the Church decided to initiate the process of beatification



concerning Mwalimu ('Teacher' – as he was popularly called by the people) Nyerere? The process of declaring Mwalimu Nyerere a saint has been initiated because of the way he conducted his public life as a politician, thinker and writer. But it is also

because of his inner (ethical) convictions and principles which motivated these public actions that the Church has found it necessary to initiate this process.

Nyerere, a devout Catholic who attended Mass daily throughout his public life and was known for fasting frequently, was a respected African leader for three decades. Already an influential figure in the British colony then known as Tanganyika, he became the country's first prime minister after independence in 1961, and was elected president the following year.

In 1967, he identified Tanzania officially as a socialist or *Ujamaa* country. This led to the "villagization" policy, a countrywide exercise of moving the

population into *Ujamaa* villages as a means to structure the country to supply people with essential social services such as schools and health centers, an impossible goal when people were living far away from each another.

Internationally, Mwalimu wore many hats and played crucial roles. He was a leader of pan-African initiatives. Nyerere relentlessly waged a diplomatic war against the South African apartheid regime. He was totally committed to the liberation of Africa, for which end he put Tanzania in the frontline of the liberation movements of Zambia, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Significantly also, Nyerere was unreservedly against the principle of “non-interference” in other countries’ “internal affairs,” if this was interpreted to mean that African leaders could commit crimes against their own people with impunity. In 1979, he sent Tanzanian troops into Uganda to overthrow the regime of the despotic Idi Amin. He was Chief International Mediator in the Burundi conflict virtually until the last days of his life.

One of his biographers writes of him: *‘He was of peasant origin, but from a ruling family. He was the son of a chief of the Zanaki tribe, one of the smallest in Tanzania with a total population of only about 40,000. An excellent student, he was also known for his extraordinary brilliance and as an original thinker throughout his life and came to be acknowledged as a ‘philosopher-king.’ Yet he also won accolades for his humility and simplicity and as one of the most humble leaders the world has ever produced.’*

Mwalimu Nyerere was full of empathy for the poor, marginalized, and excluded in general. If there is anything at all that dominated Nyerere public policy, it was his concern for this social category of people. One testimony of this spirit can be found in the number of refugees to whom his government gave shelter and helped in various ways, even when Tanzania itself was going through very difficult economic times. Citizens of neighbouring countries – Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo as examples – who found themselves in trouble because of violence and strife at home in their own countries knew they were always welcome in Tanzania, and they came in huge numbers. Some stayed for so long that they acquired citizenship if they so desired. Nyerere never complained about their stay in Tanzania or initiated any move for them to go back.

The whole *Ujamaa* policy was motivated by the desire to bring about some sort of egalitarianism in the social structures and situation of the

Tanzanian people. He refused to conceive the validity of huge economic differentials among people, where a few were rich while the majority of the population remained poor. As he put it in a speech to the Maryknoll Sisters in New York in 1971, he could not conceive of a God who was ignorant, poor, hungry and ill. How was it then, that this is the “fate” of the majority of people Christians claim were created in his image? Poverty, ignorance, and disease must therefore not be an act of God but of man. As such it had to be combated.

Nyerere’s identity as an African also led to a profound and sincere respect for African culture and traditions. While clearly critical of some dehumanizing aspects of these cultures and traditions and vocally advocating change where necessary, deep and genuine respect for African culture led him to base his entire political thought and system of socialism on the African concept of *Ujamaa*, the traditional African cooperative spirit and system which he translated as “familyhood.”

The project of his life was to integrate Africa into the modern world– not an easy task but one which he firmly believed was capable of achievement.

Nyerere was a Catholic Christian. Joining the faith in his early youth he was committed to its inner significance in a “heroic” way, and remained a faithful Catholic, without apology or embarrassment, until his last breath. And yet he was not afraid to criticize even the clergy and hierarchy of his own Catholic Church when he thought that criticism was warranted, but always in a very respectful and often humorous manner.

Nyerere’s untiring attempts to educate the Catholic hierarchy, as well as the whole religious population, that *Ujamaa* was not the same thing as atheistic communism, were frequent and sincere.

He could genuinely worship with people of other religious convictions, and often did. His level-headedness in religious matters was such that even in his last years he was looking for funds to complete the construction of a mosque, a prayer house for Muslims, at his home village in Butiama. The Catholics had a church there; why not the Muslims? His widow, Mama Maria Waningo Nyerere, saw the project to completion after his death.

Again, Mwalimu Nyerere believed that there were many strong positive moral values in African Religion as in other religious traditions. Very well versed in both, he never compared Christianity and African Religion in view of proving which of the two was “better” than the other. By refusing to

downgrade any legitimate religion for whatever reason Nyerere showed the spirit of tolerance necessary to genuine inter-religious encounter and dialogue.

Eight characteristics or virtues that were particularly outstanding in Nyerere were his: Honesty, Humility and Simplicity, Selflessness, Sincerity, Sensitivity, Commitment, Farsightedness or vision, and Loyalty. Nyerere's sense of honesty and transparency stood out in the 'dirty game' of politics. He was honest and transparent, admitting mistaken political decisions when he realized they were mistakes. Shortly after independence, in May 1962, Nyerere published a booklet called 'Let Us Correct Ourselves'. In the essay, he enumerated several mistaken tendencies that were by then already creeping into the Tanganyika Africa National Union (TANU), resigning the premiership soon after independence to reform TANU and bring it closer to the masses.

Nyerere's humility draws from a sense of profound self-knowledge and acceptance of personal fallibility. In its practical expression humility appears in the respect for human equality and a simplicity of life with a refusal for any reason to be pompous or ostentatious.

Nyerere did not entertain the idea of the government building a new house for him at Butiama, believing the old one he was living in to be sufficient. During his life he would not allow the construction of a tarmac road to Butiama, asking why other villages did not enjoy a similar privilege.

He is known to have insisted that his children be accorded no special privileges or honor just because they were his children. They had to live and prove themselves just as everyone else.

His major decisions were not taken for mere political advantage or convenience, but in the belief that they were morally correct and that they would benefit the people of Tanzania, Africa and humanity in general.

He was not afraid to make unpopular decisions when these were necessary for the good of his people. The policy of *Ujamaa* itself, the centerpiece of his political thought, a policy he embarked on knowing full well the pressures of the then two superpowers that would be brought to bear against it. To the West *Ujamaa* was unabated "godless" communism. To the then Eastern bloc it was not scientific or communist enough.

His concern, perhaps even obsession, with removing inequalities in society, and in the world is legendary. His disdain for affluence amid poverty had a spiritual aura and was deeply imbedded in his heart and mind. Mwalimu saw himself as a man with a mission, and refused the distraction that the

accumulation of earthly riches would bring in his life. In a world steeped in corruption especially in the political sphere, many have remarked about Nyerere's detachment from wealth and personal Spartan live, calling him "Mr. Clean Hands". He never amassed wealth for himself or his family. In service Nyerere was committed, never allowing flattery or threats to distract him from the course of action he had decided upon.

Several of those who had known him and had worked with him would speak of him as a man with the gift of vision. 'Though a person of great faith nevertheless he foresaw the danger of religious bigotry and fought against it in Tanzania. A person of great hope in the development of Africa, he foresaw the dangers of globalization for Africa. He seems to have been a prophet both in foretelling the future as well as in being God's mouthpiece to humanity.'

"He belonged to those few statesmen and political leaders of Africa whose names are becoming mightier with time, and whose meaningful contribution to the continent's history is still waiting for appropriate recognition."

And yet Nyerere himself once ironically observed concerning his personality and career, that perhaps politics was the wrong path for him. "You know, if I were an ordinary voter," he said, "I would say: Nyerere for the pulpit, not for the presidency." He was forever concerned with teaching the people, reaching out to them even in the remotest villages, reminding them of the highest values Tanzania stood for...why he became identified with the people's favorite title for him, 'Mwalimu,' 'Teacher.' These values which were in truth Gospel values that he embodied, lived so well and consistently fought for to the end.

Prayer for Asking Graces through the Intercession of the Servant of God, Julius Kambarage Nyerere

*O God our Father, you have created us so that we may know, serve, and love
you and love our fellow sisters and brothers.*

*We thank you, O God our Creator, for the gift of your servant, Julius
Kambarage Nyerere – a faithful layman and a father of a family –
who led your people of Tanzania as true father and teacher.*

*Our Father, your servant gave himself up completely for your people with love
that knew no boundaries, building tirelessly unity and solidarity among all
Children of God. He cared for the poor. He uplifted the downtrodden. He
consoled orphans. He welcomed and fed refugees.*

*O God, your servant, being faithful to you and to your Church –
has become for us a true example of deep faith and genuine piety.*

*He cherished a great love and respect for the Virgin Mary,
the Mother of Your Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*He dedicated the People of Tanzania to Our Lady so that they may live
peacefully under her maternal protection.*

*O God, your servant Julius Kambarage Nyerere showed great zeal
in teaching everyone to know and honour you. He defended justice and fought
relentlessly against oppression and discrimination of any kind.*

*His humble service for all people remains for all generations
an example to imitate on their way to you.*

*Almighty Father, grant us by his intercession and according to your will,
the grace we implore. May his holiness become evident
to all the people of God so that he may soon be numbered among your Saints.*

Amen

Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory be...

WEST AFRICA

Introduction

This issue of Partage Auteuil asks us to share the life of a saint celebrated in each of the countries where the Religious of the Assumption are present, a saint with a Proper Office. In West Africa we thought of making you discover the life of the first Christians whose zeal for the proclamation of the Good News in the midst of a pagan people, during the early times of the evangelization of the continent, is extraordinary. They were very valuable to the missionaries who ploughed African soil in their task of evangelization. We propose here the discovery of the life of two "African Saint Paul": Alfred-Simon Diban of Burkina Faso and Anthony Douramane of Niger. We can say that they form part of the pillars of the Church in Africa. Even if both have not yet been canonized, they are beautiful images of men having loved Christ and given their life that He may be known and loved in African soil.

Sr Viviane Mikaëla



Alfred Simon Diban, Anthony Duraman,

First Christian of BURKINA FASO

Alfred Simon Diban Ki Zerbo, First Christian of Burkina Faso

Diban Ki-Zerbo was born around 1875 in Da (near Tougan), in the present Burkina Faso. He was of the Samo ethnic group. In his language, his name *Ki* means “Chief” and *Zerbo* comes from *zèrè bô*, which means “choose the path” meaning “scout, guide”. His first name, *Diban*, means “excellent talisman (remedy)”. He had 2 brothers and 3 sisters and was the 2nd child of the family.

The colonizing troops arrived between 1895 and 1896. The Samos resisted, but were conquered by the strength of the French army. The crackdown against the rebels was merciless: crops burnt, granaries destroyed. Famine hit the region. It was a struggle for survival. The Samos sold their cattle, their horses, their donkeys, and, when there was nothing left to sell, the desperate parents sold their own children. Diban’s father entrusted him to his maternal aunt for her to take care of him because she loved him very much thinking that in that way he would be protected from the famine. With his younger brother, Diban, then aged about 20, went to work in the fields of his great uncle.

One day he was hit from behind by a man who had been hiding. Diban turned to face the aggressor. The fight ensued. Diban defended himself well but other men suddenly appeared and knocked him down, immobilized him and tied him up. They were men from a neighboring village. He was given up to merchants who bound him and laid him transversal upon a horse. There he was a captive. He was brought to Sofara, a port on the Niger of Timbuktu where he was sold as a slave to a man from Bourdamou. Arriving in the village of his master, he remained chained with his left wrist chained to his right foot during four months. Released, he was first required to do menial tasks: laundry, cutting wood, then he was charged with shepherding the flock with his master and transporting branches and grass. When his master absented himself he was chained. Diban did not accept his condition of slavery and was determined to escape. Diban managed to escape three times but, tracked by his master, he was recaptured and cruelly punished and tortured and chained once more especially at night. Finally, in his own words, a “beautiful young

lady filled with light” appeared and encouraged him, telling him that his captivity would end. Diban organized himself better, deluded the vigilance of his master and managed to reach Kabara. He hid in the Niger River, with water up to his neck, for a whole night. Fishermen put him into their canoe and brought him to the White Fathers who had arrived in Timbuktu in May 1895. These welcomed him and led him to Segou where a mission station was opened that same year.

A new life with Christ, untiring missionary

At Segou, Diban worked with the masons, worked in the fields and began his catechumenate. He was brought to Banankourou, the new mission at about 20 kms from Segou. He quickly won the trust of the Fathers. He was a bit of a handyman. He was happy with this work. He was baptized on the 6th of May 1901. Father Ficheux, who baptized him, said: “I add the name of Simon to that of Alfred because of your heart, your faith and your courage! I think that one can build a solid church on you.” Sometime after his baptism, because of his zeal for learning, he was chosen as a student catechist. Alfred Diban had already learned to read and write. In May 1904 he married Louise Coulibaly. That year, Msgr. Bazin decides to open a mission in the capital of Mossi land, Ouagadougou. Alfred Simon accompanied the Fathers for this foundation. Upon his arrival he began his work as catechist by announcing the Good News. There was no Christian as yet in that place. But the Christian faith spread rather quickly. Alfred Simon quickly learned the Moore, the language of the Mossi. He helped build the first church, the dispensary and the house of the Fathers. In February 1905 his first child, a son, is born. That year he was able to return to his native village for a few months and find his parents, brothers and sisters. His joy was short-lived upon learning that his mother died during the long period he was away from his village.

Back in Ouagadougou, he learned that he was to accompany the Fathers for the foundation of a new mission in the Wa region, land of the Gourounsi, in the north of the present Ghana. The English Commander told them upon arrival, to settle in Navrongo. His work at the service of the Fathers and also as evangelizer began again. In 1912 he accompanied other Fathers to found a new mission in Reo, also of the Gourounsi, in the actual Burkina Faso. In 1913 he was asked to help construct a new mission in the land of the Samo, his native land, in Toma. He set to work with much joy. He hoped to stay there but the Fathers of Reo asked him to return. Upon his arrival he learned that his wife Louise had died. He obtained permission to go to Da, his hometown,

to choose a new wife to take care of his children. But the one he had chosen was not around. At the end of the time permitted him, he returned to Reo. He spoke to the Fathers about his desire to settle down in Toma. They gave their consent.

At Toma, Alfred Simon built himself a house and put himself at the service of the mission as catechist, cook, a man of confidence. In 1914 he married Folo Ki, who was to receive the name Therese at her baptism after her catechumenate. In 1916, during the First World War, uprisings took place in the land of the Samos, the Bwaba and the Markas against the colonizers and their imperatives: taxes, conscription of young men, forced labor ... The Fathers in Toma, were obliged, due to threats, to take refuge in Ouagadougou. Alfred Diban stayed on to protect the church and the mission, to sustain the faith of the catechumens and of the neophytes and to ensure the Sunday liturgies. He received death threats from the rebels. He organized the defense of Toma when it was attacked by the rebels. During the whole period in which the Fathers were away from Toma, Alfred Simon was the animator and the guide of the nascent Christian community. He continued to minister for a number of years even after the return of the Fathers. He visited the sick and the aged, prepared the dying for baptism, took from his crops to feed the hungry, cultivated his fields, went around praying his rosary, encouraged the lukewarm, prepared the young for marriage, led the prayer, cooked for the Fathers. Even though advanced in age, he went to Mass every morning and prayed before the statue of Mary of the grotto of Lourdes built on a small hill.

By his two successive wives, Alfred Simon had 14 children many of whom died at an early age, and one of whom, the seventh, Joseph Ki-Zerbo became a great historian of Africa.

In 1975, at the age of 100, he participated in the pilgrimage of the Burkinabes in Rome for the Holy Year. His desire was to shake the hand of Pope Paul VI but due to his age and the pressing crowds, he was not able to approach the Pope. A private audience was then organized by Cardinals Zoungrana and Gantin. On 5 May 1975, he was received by Paul VI, who allowed him to sit on his own chair. The Pope conferred on him the medal of the Knights of St. Sylvester. After Rome he went on pilgrimage to Lourdes and then stopped by Paris. A great crowd welcomed him back in Ouagadougou. In Toma it was a time for feasting. Alfred Simon Diban though progressively

becoming weaker lived 5 years more. Towards the end he was hardly able to walk.

On May 10, 1980, John Paul II, during a trip to Africa, stopped in Ouagadougou to celebrate the Eucharist. Joseph, the son of Alfred, brought his Father to Ouagadougou for the celebration. But he was too weak and stayed in the hospital. The Pope sent Cardinal Gantin to greet the “old man”. Alfred Simon Diban followed the Eucharistic celebration broadcast over the radio and fell asleep in the peace of Christ at the moment when Pope John Paul II gave the final blessing. The funeral of the 1st Christian and the 1st catechist of Burkina was a national event. The whole Church of that country, and the country as a whole, celebrated with a festive ceremonial the death of the “old man” in a great feast full of joy and of gratitude. He was buried in Toma, in his house, in the presence of the Head of State, a large crowd, all the bishops of the country among whom was the first Samo bishop, Msgr. Zéphirin Toé and Cardinal Zoungrana, several bishops from the neighboring countries, among them the bishop of Segou, Msgr. Mori Julien Sidibé, and a great number of priests and religious women. At his death there were already more than 500,000 baptized Christians in the country.

From all that is said above we note that Di Alfred Diban KI-ZERBO was a great missionary, we can say the “Saint Paul” of the Church of Burkina given the large number of churches he founded. Man of charity, he bore witness to the Gospel by his faith, his prayer, his devotedness at the service of the sick.

Guy Villemin, Missionary of Africa, White Fathers

<http://www.mission.catholique.fr/semaine-missionnaire-mondiale/ressources-documentaires/alfred-simon-diban-ki-zerbo-1875.html>



On the pontifical throne of Paul VI, Alfred Diban Ki Zerbo. On the extreme left, his son, Professor Joseph Ki Zerbo. On the right, his companion, M. Moïse, Mgr Bernadin Gantin du Bénin, and Cardinal Zoungrana, of Ouagadougou

Prayer

God our Father,

we thank you for having given us Alfred Diban.

His whole life has been a light for us, because he lived according to Your will, in joy and thanksgiving at the service of the poor and the sick, giving them hope. He sustained numerous trials counting on You alone.

Lord you have made him, through Your Spirit, a courageous missionary and a man of prayer.

Wherever he was sent, he proclaimed the Good News with much fruit.

Through his life you show us that each one of us can find happiness if we put our hope in You.

Lord, grant me through your servant Alfred Diban, the graces I ask for:

May your Church recognize your Work in the marvelous life of Alfred Diban, in order to make of it a model for all Christians of our times.

Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen !

Anthony Douramane Tahirou

**First Christian and first Catechist of NIGER
1903-2002**



**Anthony Douramane Tahirou
First Christian and First Catechist of Niger
1903-2002**

Born in 1903 in Fantyo, “river bed” in the Gorououl of Niger, Douramane is the fourth of a family of eight children. From his father Tahirou and his mother Binta he received an education in the values of the sonraï: freedom, courage, endurance and

honor. First shepherd, then farmer and hunter, Douramane integrated himself

into the life of his people. In January 1923, at the age of 20, he was recruited with other youth of his age for military service. They first went to Dori (in Burkina Faso), 80km from his village, then to Ouaga where they stayed a short while before leaving for Abidjan where they set sail for Tunisia. In Bizerte (Tunisia), he discovered a new religion. First the habit of a White Father on his way to church intrigued him and from then on he nourished a great desire to know more about Christianity.

He renewed his commitment in the army after December 1926, when his military service ended. He was assigned to the 8th regiment Senegalese riflemen, and then returned to the company's divisional training. It was then that he made a discovery that was to give a new orientation to his life. He met "*African Christians*" for the first time. These were people from Dahomey (Benin) belonging to the same unit as himself: Gabriel, Augustine, Marcellinus and many others, but especially Lieutenant Thomas Koffi. Douramane for the first time heard about a certain Jesus who came to make known to all peoples of all races "the path of God"⁶. Douramane, like his father Tahirou and all his ancestors, desired to know this "path of God". A songhaï proverb says: "He who wins God wins everything". Douramane thought "that is what counts in life". And that is what the African Christians revealed to him by their behavior towards others as well as by their words, that God truly came close to men, that he is not only *ir-koi* (our chief) as the Songhaï name Him, but *ir-baabe* (our Father). This proximity of God to men gave Douramane a taste of great confidence in God Who loves and helps His children in difficult situations. This discovery moved him deeply and he asked to know more about this "Jesus" Who saves men. The soldiers from Dahomey became his first catechists.

In 1927, having become a Corporal, he was permitted to discover Paris which he did not know. There he had the chance of entering a Catholic Church for the first time. With the military chaplain he visited the sick and experienced the living Christ Who gives life and health. He accompanied the chaplain the day he gave the sacrament of the sick to a Malagasy about to die. Great was Douramane's surprise at meeting the "dying" man that same evening in the courtyard of the hospital narrating to whomsoever wished to hear that the Sacrament had revived him. For Douramane, this was "a sign on the road towards Jesus" because he understood that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He faithfully followed his catechism classes given by a Malagasy catechist who gave him his catechumenate book before leaving.

⁶ Ibid, p. 17

Back in Ouaga in 1928, he first went to Father Durrieu expressing his desire to continue his Christian initiation before returning to his village. His arrival in Fantyo was a source of great joy. Douramane did not delay in telling his father that he had found a new way. His father encouraged him in these words: “if you have found a guide for your path, follow him”⁷. He stayed 4 months in his village and then returned to Ouagadougou to meet Father Durrieu, who entrusted him to a Mossi catechist named Alexander Ima Younga for the continuation of his initiation. This was done more intensively: three meetings with the catechist and two meetings with the priest.

In 1929, Douramane left Upper Volta (the present Burkina Faso) for Algeria. From Philippeville, he was assigned to Djidjeli and on Christmas Eve he was baptized together with eight others from Upper Volta. He chose the name Anthony in memory of the Patron Saint of the local Church there but also because of the holy life of Anthony of Padua. Back from Algeria he returned to his village to settle there and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. But to make his compatriots understand that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life “is as hard as speaking to them of the snow that they have never seen”. And yet, Anthony Douramane “felt a strength in him that urged him to reveal to them the faith that inhabited him”. “He could not not announce Jesus to people”. In opposition with his own people, he was obliged to leave the village to create his own Christian enclave. He built a large mud house for his family and all those who adhered to Christianity joined him there. There he served as a catechist pending the arrival of the missionaries.

Anthony Douramane knew the hard law of the survival of the clan where more than half of the children died before weaning, where malaria, amoebiasis, bilharzia, leprosy drastically cut off those who reached adulthood. If we want men, we must have babies. “If we want Christians, I must do everything possible”, thought Douramane, “since I am the only Christian among the Songhai.”

⁷ Ibid., p. 18.



Antoine

Douramane entouré de sa famille

Douramane experienced a lot of difficulties with his animist brothers who tried all means to challenge him. But through his great faith and his love of Christ, he succeeded in converting some heads of families and of asserting himself in his milieu. A conviction dwelt in him: he had received a mission to accomplish: that of proclaiming Jesus Christ Way and Liberator. In 1933, he married a young woman named Esseta in a religious ceremony.

Sergeant Douramane renewed his commitment to the army one last time for a period of four years when his four-month leave expired, but this time he did not leave Niger. He was sent to Tahoua, then to Agadès, in the Northeast. For three and a half years he went throughout Air with the Camel Platoon to which he was affected. He was a Staff Sergeant in 1936 and in 1938 retired from service in Fantyo his native village to evangelize his people. He would go twice a year to Upper Volta, at Christmas and Easter, astride a camel to participate at Mass, a distance of 800 kms, that is, 2 - 3 weeks travel. He maintained a good relationship with Monsignor Thevenou, Father Durrieu and especially his catechist, Alexander Ima Youngo, whom he met in Ouagadougou with much gratitude. He expressed his desire for missionaries in Niger to Msgr. Thevenou. In 1931, the first priest settled in Niamey and created the first Catholic Mission of Niger. The Apostolic Prefecture of Niamey was created in 1942. The

responsibility of evangelization was entrusted to the Fathers of the African Mission (SMA) headed by Msgr. Francis Faroud. This was the time for ‘plowing’, the first step towards the creation of a diocese. The Apostolic Prefecture was entrusted to the Redemptorist Fathers in 1948 with Msgr. Constant Quillard in charge. This stage lasted 11 years and will be marked by the creation of mission posts throughout the territory. In 1961 the Apostolic Prefecture of Niamey became the Diocese of Niamey, sign of the vitality of the Church in Niger. She could now stand on her own in terms of evangelization. Monsignor Berlier became the first Bishop of the Diocese of Niamey. It was the flowering season. We await harvest-time which belongs to God.⁸ *“In the Church of Niger, development work is constitutive with evangelization and the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. In God’s field one must be patient; the grain does not grow overnight. Through long years one must learn and live the time for sowing, the time of the patience of friendship lived with people, with our Muslim brothers. Much time is needed often to become friends, to share one’s faith with them, to value each other deeply.”*⁹ Today, more than 200 missionary priests (Redemptorists and Fidei Donum), brothers, religious are at the service of the Gospel in this immense land of 1,187,000 km² with a population of almost four million, 90% of whom remain Muslim or follow the traditional religion. The Christians from Niger are but a handful but as Anthony said: “If the seed is good, the field will grow”.

“If the grain of wheat does not die it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” On the 2nd of November 2002, Anthony Douramane entered eternal life at the age of 99. At the threshold of death he kept repeating, “Lord, show me Your Face.”

“Saint Douramane” of Niger is one of the pillars of the Church in Africa. His life was totally given so that Jesus Christ may be known and loved in Africa. We believe that he intercedes with God so that “Jesus Christ may live in the hearts of men.”

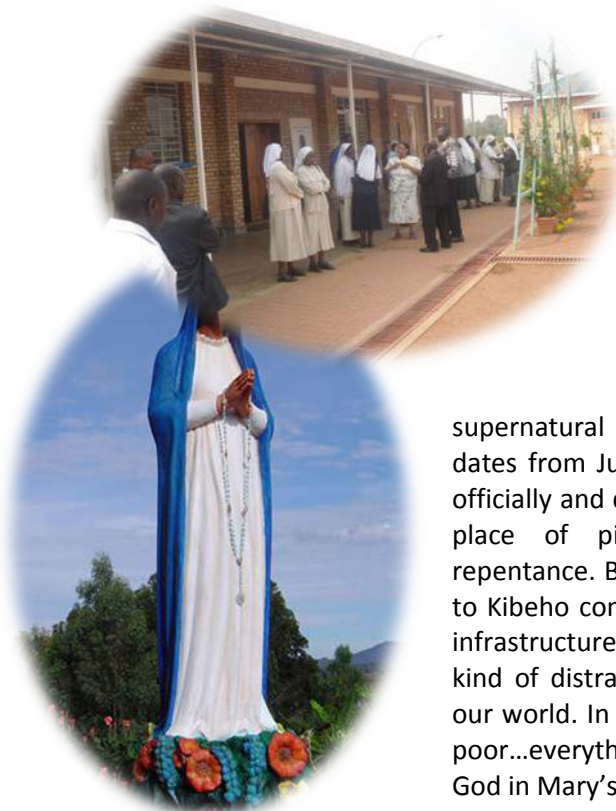
Zahara ISSIFI and Sr Marie-Claire (great grandchildren of Anthony Douramane)

Notre Dame de Kibeho: “I am the Mother of the Word”

RWANDA

⁸ Cf. Michel Cartatéguy, Bishop of Niamey, “Niger: Origin of the Catholic Church in Niger; Role of the SMA », 17 October 2006

⁹ The Testimony of a Little Sister of Jesus, reported by Bernard JOUANNO, La Croix
Site [http : //fides.org/frat/index.html](http://fides.org/frat/index.html)



It's on that tender tone that the Holy Virgin Mary, Our Lady of Kibeho (Rwanda) miraculously appeared on November 28, 1981 to three young adolescent girls telling them that she had a message that they had to transmit to the whole world.

The authentication of these supernatural events by the Catholic Church dates from June 29, 2001. Since then, Kibeho officially and definitively became a holy land, a place of pilgrimage, of prayer and of repentance. But what do the people who flock to Kibeho come to see? An attractive touristic infrastructure? Influential people? No. This kind of distractions and recreation abound in our world. In Kibeho everything is modest and poor...everything allows for an encounter with God in Mary's school.

The lines that follow are a testimony of an eyewitness and want to insist on the content of the revelations, their meaning for the believers in general and for the Rwandan people in particular.

◆ **What do you want to see in Kibeho?**

As other places chosen by Heaven, Kibeho is in a lost corner, one of the most modest and poorest of Rwanda.

The greatness of Kibeho is found, however, in the fact that there everything reflects God's grandeur: the clean air, the serene atmosphere that invites to recollection and to prayer, the hills that elevate the soul to a profound encounter with God...

◆ **The content of the revelations**

1. A call to repentance and to conversion: ***“Repent, Repent, Repent!” “Convert yourselves while there is still time.”***

This pressing call to conversion and to sincere prayer by the Mother of the Word is the very core of the message of Kibeho because the Holy Virgin said: “The world is not well”. “The world is doomed, it will fall into an abyss...into countless and ceaseless woes. The world is in rebellion against God, too many sins are committed there. there is neither love nor peace”. “If you do not repent and convert your hearts, you will fall into an abyss.” This often anxious call (see the apparition of August 15, 1982 where the visionaries saw the Mother of God cry) was often accompanied by terrifying images: a river of blood, people killing each other, abandoned corpses with no one to bury them... without further ado the Rwandan people understood the reasons for such an affliction especially because ten years later the prophesy was concretized in the genocide. If only those tears had ceased to flow! Is not our world always ill giving free rein to the activities of darkness? We are often in search of meaning and of signs...only the sign of Jonas will be given us.

2. ***“Faith and unbelief come together without our even being aware of it.”*** (Faith and unbelief coexist maliciously!)

Mysterious words, certainly, but which the whole world heard several times at the beginning of the apparitions.

3. The theme of salvific suffering

This theme is one of the most important in the history of the apparitions of Kibeho. Suffering, inevitable in this world, is an obligatory path to arrive at heavenly glory... “No one gets to heaven without suffering”. “The child of Mary is not separated from suffering”. The visionaries were invited to live out this message: to accept suffering in faith and joy, to mortify themselves and to renounce pleasure for the conversion of the world. Kibeho is a reminder of the cross of Christ in the life of the Christian and of the Church. The rosary of the seven sorrows helps in the meditation and the welcome of suffering at the school of Our Lady of Sorrows.

4. Pray without ceasing and without hypocrisy

Men do not pray and even those who do so do not pray as they should. The Blessed Virgin asks the visionaries to pray a lot for the world, to teach others



to pray. The Virgin asks that there be greater zeal at prayer and to pray without hypocrisy. She also asks to pray unceasingly for the Church because, she says, great tribulations await her in the future.

5. The mysticism of flowers

The apparitions of Kibeho make use of both rites and symbols: blessing of **water**, **a field of flowers** that the visionaries always have to water. These flowers of different kinds and qualities symbolize men in the reception of the Message. One of the distinctive signs of the statue of Our Lady of Kibeho is that Mary is hovering over the flowers.

◆ For everyone in search of God

Kibeho is today a place of pilgrimage and of meeting for those who seek God. It is a place of conversion, of reparation for our own sins and the sins of the world. It is a place of reconciliation, a place of compassion and of fraternity without borders.

They come from Europe, America, Africa and especially from the countries of the great lakes, to meet Our Lady. Locally the pilgrimages are organized each year especially around significant dates like the 15th of August, the 15th of September, the 28th of November...

Do you realize, **you who have just read this message**, that your family, your community...your group whatever it be, is a field of flowers in the midst of which the Virgin Mary hovers to take care of the faded flower, to water the ones dying of thirst...What are you doing about the wilted flower in your field..., the field of God?

- How do you see your suffering? Does it bring you more and more to greater communion with GOD whose call remains without much effect and you continue to gather the bitter fruits of the tree of disobedience, the eyes turned towards the kingdom of darkness though we are children of the light, children of the day? (1Th 5:5; Ep. 5:8).

- The Mother of the Word calls us who pray without ceasing, to a sincere prayer, a prayer that transforms, that changes us and that changes those we meet. Let us not be those signposts that orient others while we ourselves remain fixed in the same place. To pray without hypocrisy is to keep ourselves from being those tombs white on the outside while full of rot within!



- More than one will say that the Message of Kibeho is nothing new, but an urgent call, with a new clarity of what we had forgotten so as to awaken us, buffet our consciences warn us and remind us of the demands of our divine filiation.

May this message encourage us to change our lives for a spiritual recovery.

Today let us not harden our hearts but let us hear the voice of the Lord. (Ps 94/95)

Let us not afflict our Mother by our blindness and our callousness.

Let me conclude this article with this passage from St. Paul to the Corinthians: *“All the runners at the stadium are trying to win, but only one of them gets the prize. You must run in the same way, meaning to win. All the fighters at the games go into strict training; they do this just to win a wreath that will wither away, but we do it for a wreath that will never wither. That is how I run, intent on winning; that is how I fight, not beating the air. **I treat my body hard and***

make it obey me, for, having been an announcer myself, I should not want to be disqualified.” (1 CO. 9, 24-27)

I'd like to believe that those who have had the privilege of experiencing remotely or closely particular graces, have also known how to read the signs of the times without it being too late. For the people of Rwanda at least, many prophecies have been fulfilled to the letter with the genocide that swept across the country and which consequences affect the world. For the hesitant, the hour has come to awake from sleep. The night is far advanced, the day is at hand. Let us put off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. (Rom 13:11-12)

Our Lady of Kibeho, Mother of the Word, we bless you for your renewed presence in our human history, especially your presence at Kibeho when our world had so much need. Give us the necessary strength to welcome your call to conversion, to repentance and to live according to the Spirit of your Son. Teach us to pray without hypocrisy, to love each other sincerely, to understand the value of the Cross in our life. And we will be able to share with you this life in God the first fruits of which you already allow us to taste. Amen.

3. THE WAY OF THE CROSS

The Way of the Cross is subdivided into 14 panels of unequal sizes each representing a station and placed in a non-chronological order.

The general symbolism:

Below are the represented the images of our humanity, of evil, of the cruelty of the human being, of the fear that paralyzes, of physical suffering, of humiliation, of abandonment but also that of mutual help.

We go then from below, the earth, towards the height, heaven, the spiritual, the values of listening, of interiorisation, of love, of fidelity, of compassion, of encounter with the Father.

It is the journey of everyone: the human wishes to meet the divine, wishes to approach it, to create a link, an ark of the covenant with God.

It is then a path of resurrection and of perfection towards the Light. Marie Eugenie, the Saint, foundress of the Assumption would say: Path of the conscious and daily interiorisation of Jesus' message.

Semi-abstract, semi-figurative painting:

The figurative aspect gives the key to the interpretation. Since it is reduced, it tends to send an essential message.

The abstract aspect of the paintings allows for inner recollection. The work abounds with possibilities for interpretation. Each one is just for oneself. The work can lead to personal meditation, to introspection, to questioning, to prayer.

A chronological or non-chronological way of the Cross?

Having observed a kind of weariness in the classical, chronological and somewhat tedious Way of the Cross, I propose to put an invigorating new look on the "via crucis", which pushes the pilgrim – because the one who does it is in a journey with Christ – to enter more deeply into the process and to allow oneself to be touched by an event or a facet of the way of the Cross.

This Way of the Cross can begin with any panel as when we speak of ourselves we do not generally begin with the encounter of our two parents.

Jan Goris, July 2010

(14th Station) The empty tomb

From below the gaze rises upward and in a swirl is transformed into a path towards the light of the Resurrection. Above the tomb a lot of red, a lot of love and a swirl of faith, of energy, of graces, like the flame of a candle that rises in a swirl, traversing the light pure and raw and passing to another thing, another stage and again more love, up above, the heavens, the dwelling of the Father.

At the same time, however, this big central panel represents the Cross where we can discern the face of Jesus.

Furthermore, the panel is slightly higher than the others and thus presents an image of a cross to the whole.

(12th Station) Mary, John and Mary Magdalene

They would have loved to be, not at the foot of the Cross but very, very close to Him at the moment of His death, to hear His last words, His last words of love.

and ... **Marie Eugenie**, perhaps a bit embarrassed to be placed so high, in such a beautiful place, and yet proud, happy and in her place and saying: "follow me, see what happens when we follow Him" and that "He alone fills the fullness of our heart". She also said: "You are daughters of the Assumption. This mystery which is more of heaven than of earth is a mystery of adoration. Upon leaving this earth and in being assumed into heaven, the Blessed Virgin will render to God a supreme honor. There she is ready to honor God as Mary did in her Assumption."

And..., almost invisible, the Angel of the Lord, the closest to Jesus on the Cross, very close too to the world that He would love to bring to God.

(2nd Station) Jesus takes up His Cross

Jesus is charged with what the Father asked of Him, charged with His mission. At the bottom the Cross is as if rooted, clinging to the earth, and above, linked with heaven. Anchor and human experience Cross, Cross that has to be uprooted from its mortal sins, Cross nourished by the origins, our history, mother earth. Cross that He will raise on the mountain, Cross that links us to the essential, to the heavenly guides who are the saints, the angels and archangels, to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to the words of the Father. Thanks to the Cross, Jesus creates the link. God asks of us to make something out of our cross, to uproot it from evil, to raise it elsewhere, higher, in the light, and to plant it like a tree of life and of love.

(4th Station) Jesus meets His Mother

She was always at the beginning of the road, close to Him.

Their gaze is that of persons who love each other.

All of a sudden she sees the face of her Son and remembers: she thinks she recognizes her angel.

Her tears disappear.

Her face becomes that of a young girl in love.

Their fingers delicately touching on this Cross that separates them.

She in fact knew from the beginning.

The angel had announced she would see it again.

(13th Station) Mary takes the Body of her Son

Near the Cross and near Jesus we once more find Mary.

Jesus no longer has features; He has already left His Body.

However, Mary embraces Him one last time, a hand on His open side, which she cares for and symbolically closes the wound, and the image on her heart.

Is His Heart still beating very faintly? To believe that He is alive despite everything. Feel this Body one last time and bind herself to love, to the link of eternal life. A heavenly light that traverses everything floods the scene. Yes, Jesus is still very much Alive.

The disposition of this Way of the Cross allows us to see how important and present Mary is which does not necessarily appear in the classic Way of the Cross. Mary surrounds her Son with her love, as she is present for us - and we do not necessarily see her - she who is full of grace.

(11th Station) Jesus is nailed to the Cross

At the center under the cross, the hand pierced by the nail: Jesus is nailed to the Cross.

Terrible experience of torture, of the cruelty of man towards man or towards the Other, the stranger he does not know.

Without realizing it, I have painted a white hand. Resurrection garment.

And this cross that mounts, transparent towards heaven, and this hand that calls, that opens...

(10th Station) Jesus is stripped of His garments

Jesus is naked.

He suddenly feels alone and apparently abandoned by men and by God.

Man would quickly tend to despair.

To be abandoned and humiliated is a terrible experience for man.
Yet Jesus, in His nakedness is transparent with light and as if purified.
A new baptism before leaving us: the more they strip Him, the more the light
and the colors appear, the more He blends with the colors, the more He is
linked to Everything, to the created universe, the more He is the Son of God.

(3rd Station) Jesus falls for the first time

The Cross is heavy.

Jesus falls, like us before a too heavy trial.

He has a hard time.

It is as if He were coming out from the rubble of a house bombed during the
wars of men, as if he were supporting a cement beam so that the survivors
may go out.

Path of conflicts,

Consequences of power play, of domination, of human suffering.

(5th Station) Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His Cross

Jesus imagines that a man will come to help Him carry His Cross! He can
always imagine? Well no, Simon runs up, pushed by the light and by love.
Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His Cross. God needs man! He invites us to
help Him and to love Him. Love does not go only in one direction. He shares
everything with us. Let us be vigilant and attentive. But that seems so
incredible. Man fears the 'what will they say'; he is more inclined to refuse,
not to commit himself to the end, each one for himself, watchful of the
consequences.

Jesus tells us: No false humility. He needs us, needs our love, our creativity,
our openness and our wakeful senses, our goodness, our compassion.

(1st Station) Pilate delivers Jesus up

The sky is heavy, dark and stormy. It is not over yet.

Jesus Himself is condemned to death. Pilate sees no motive for condemnation
yet he delivers Jesus to His executioners. They put a crown of thorns on His
head.

Abused children, humiliated or tortured men and women, all find comfort in
divine justice: God alone knows the path our life takes to achieve its end, why
we carry this cross, through what path, and what is our mission. He only asks
us to trust Him.

(6th Station) Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Veronica is so permeated by her encounter with Jesus that she herself becomes the reflection of His face.

She is as if transfigured by her encounter with Jesus. One finds there a bit of the crown of Jesus but also the serenity and the depth and the love of her Savior.

It is not the fabric that is imprinted by the encounter, but herself.

Can we not do the same?

Dare to go meet Him?

And be transfigured?

(8th Station) The women of Jerusalem weep over Jesus

There perhaps is our place, there where we are on our journey towards the light of God, where we must find again the great loving interior vision of Marie Eugenie to remain above easy criticism, the gaze of relatives, the injustice of men. It is there that we face our/or their passivity. It is there that we must adore Him. It is there that we must commit ourselves and live in fullness.

They came as a group, together, the women of Jerusalem. Traces of tears are seen throughout the painting like those one leaves on a love letter. All wanted to see Him a last time and also be seen...Jesus recognizes them, each one.

Marie Eugenie says: "You are daughters of the Assumption. This mystery which is more of heaven than of earth is a mystery of adoration. From heaven the Blessed Virgin wins souls for God and forms, in the girls who give themselves to her, other adorers who should follow her steps. Our Rule begins with these words: Before all things, my dear daughters, love God and love your neighbor."

(7th Station) Jesus falls the second time

There He is beneath the Cross, as if crushed by it.

It is nothing.

If he has fallen it is because it is the divine plan, the occasion to thank the earth that received Him and made Him grow; His Body blends with the landscape.

Thank you, He says, for giving Me through this fall the occasion to embrace this earth that welcomed Me, that allowed me to experience life.

Thank you to all its inhabitants. Once more I send them all My love, as well as to the whole of creation.

(9th Station) Jesus falls the third time

Jesus will fall 'only' three times.

On falling, Jesus goes through the human experience. Here, however, He links it to the Creator. The Cross becomes transparent below. Jesus redresses it as if freed from its weight and then one sees this Cross in the light, path of eternal life. Jesus roots His Cross and makes of it a tree of life which again passes by the light, pure and raw. He is the link between us and the Father. He teaches us the way of patience and of Faith. He shows us the way when He tells us what to do with our cross, to redress it, to root it on the mountain, to make of it a tree of Life. And decide to live in a more supernatural way, more conscious and more deeply in line with our Creator.

Marie Eugenie would say: Jesus demands that one be able to "pay attention with one's heart and one's spirit" to come to "follow God fully" and arrive at eternal joy. All are allowed to ask for light, to say with fervor, with ardor: "Lord, that I may see". "One can see the things of God in a more elevated, more penetrating, deeper way. It is the effect of special graces given to certain souls."

Just like this prayer, the painting will start off from the bottom and go towards the light. We must link our human experience to the ultimate goal: that He become for us "the only light" and that we arrive at eternal joy.

Finally

The panels present many other ways of reading and approaching them. I think that what is essential is the spirit, the openness and the meditation in which the Way of the Cross is experienced.

The painting, the gestures and the inspiration followed and accompanied prayer. I hope that just as for the stained glass, the paintings will allow us to see the things of Life in a deeper and more elevated way. May the spirit of Marie Eugenie penetrate those who wish to encounter Jesus on His path of Life.

4. FAMILY CHRONICLES

◊ Visits and activities of the General Council in 2011

15 April - 10 July

3rd Year Session - Auteuil

▶ 2 - 28 May: *General Chapter of the Augustinians of the Assumption*

3 and 4 May

International Finance Team - Auteuil

5 and 6 May

Finance Commission - Auteuil

10 - 17 May

Chad: Martine

16 - 26 May

India: Marie Emmanuel

19 May - 9 June

Spain: *Diana*

19-23 May: *Katrin*

27-30 May: *Brigitte*

3-5 June: *Martine*

13 - 24 June

Madagascar: *Diana*

- ▶ 1 - 25 June: *General Chapter of the Little Sisters of the Assumption*
- ▶ 27 June - 21 July: *General Chapter of the Oblates of the Assumption*
- ▶ 4 - 27 July: *General Chapter of the Orantes of the Assumption*

29 July - 16 August

Mexico: *Martine*

30 August - 30 September

Rwanda: *Martine, Katrin*

1 - 30 September

East Africa: *Diana, Brigitte, Marie Emmanuel*

5 November - 28 January 2012

Session in preparation for Final Vows - Auteuil

7 - 12 December

South Atlantic: *Diana, Martine*

◆ **Anniversaries of Foundations**

25 years of the foundation of Singida - Tanzania

25 years of the foundation of Mwezi - Rwanda

25 years of the foundation of San Luis - Guatemala

25 years of the foundation of Worcester - USA

50 years of the foundation of Nyange - Rwanda

50 years of the foundation of Kabuye - Rwanda

◇ **3rd Year Session**

Province	Name
Central America - Cuba	Emperatriz Santos Amparo Catalán
South Atlantic	Maristela Correia Costa Helena Maria Rodrigues
Ecuador – Chile	Maria Angeles Carpio Murillo Maria Zoila Balbina Quichimbo
France	Marie Laure Sabourin Véronique Thiébaud
India	Asha Enamattan
Mexico	Isabelle Eugénie Gorgeu
Philippines-Thailand	Estela Marie Rocoles Irene Cecile Torres Mary Sheryl Reyes
Rwanda-Chad	Anne Marie Musabyimana Marthe Marie Nzabakurama Marie Laeticia Byukusenge

◇ **General Chapter of the Assumptionists 2011**

On May 11, 2011, the General Chapter of the Assumptionists elected Fr. Benoît Grière new Superior General of the Congregation.

Fr. Benoît Grière becomes the 10th Superior General of the Augustinians of the Assumption (also called Assumptionists).

Fr. Benoît (53) from France succeeds Fr. Richard Lamoureux (USA) who finishes two mandates of six years each as head of the Congregation.

The Assumptionists today number 834 religious and 45 novices in 130 communities in 30 countries on every continent.

Benoît Grière was born on May 22, 1985, in Chauny (France).

After completing his secondary education in Epernay (Marne), he studied medicine at Reims (1976-85) and, simultaneously, began his studies in Philosophy in preparation for the priesthood (1981-87).

He pursued his theological studies at the Seminary of Reims (1987-89) and then at the Catholic Institute of Paris (1989-93). He holds a Masters Degree in Theology.

He did his military service in Dakar (Senegal), as research assistant at the Orstom Institute, nutrition section (1985-86).

He entered the Congregation of the Augustinians of the Assumption (Assumptionists) in 1991 having completed his Noviciate in Sceaux (Hauts-de-Seine) and he was ordained a priest in 1995 in Epernay.

In 1995, he is named to Madagascar as coordinator of health services in the diocese of Tuléar and in 1999, becomes professor of Theology in the Seminary of Fianarantsoa. He also served as Pastor, prison physician and responsible for the Center for nutritional Rehabilitation. In 1998, he is named to the ethics committee for the Catholic Church in Madagascar.

He returns to France in 1999 as First Assistant to the Provincial of France, responsible for Bayard (2002-2005).

Since 2005, he was the Superior of the Province of France for the Augustinians of the Assumption, a Province which today comprises 252 members, in 41 communities, in France as well in Eastern Europe, Italy (Florence), the Near East, Africa (Togo) and Asia (Korea, Vietnam).

First Words of Fr. Benoît Grière, moments after his election

"I accept my election.

Last Saturday when we chose a biblical model as a symbol of the Superior General, I chose St. Paul: an Apostle, a man of conviction and enthusiasm... but I am not Saint Paul. I am more like Moses with an iron will but aware of his limitations.

I have had some health problems these last months. I am aware of these limitations which are not only physical but also human and spiritual as well. The Lord sometimes lets us travel difficult roads but he always guides us toward the Promised Land: For us in the Assumption, the Promised Land is called the Kingdom.

Disciples of Emmanuel d'Alzon, this is the road we must take. We do so with this sentence from St. Augustine in mind: "It is better to have a lame person on the road than a runner in the ditch." I have also fallen. But brothers helped me to get up.

Today, our Congregation is made up of all these brothers: sometimes falling but still limping along. I accept to continue on this road toward the Kingdom. With you!

Let us give thanks for all those who accept to take on responsibilities because they help us to be faithful to the Gospel."

On Thursday 12 May 2012, Brother Didier Remiot was elected General Treasurer of the Augustinians of the Assumption for a period of 6 years. Fathers Emmanuel Kahindo Kihugho, John Franck and Macelo Marciel were elected Assistant Generals for a period of 6 years.

TO FATHER BENOÎT AND THE NEW GENERAL COUNCIL, WE EXPRESS OUR JOY AND ASSURE YOU OF OUR PRAYERS. NOUS EXPRIMONS NOTRE JOIE ET LES ASSURONS DE NOTRE PRIÈRE. WE WISH THEM GOOD LUCK! THE SPIRIT COMES TO INSEMINATE THE OLD AND THE NEW, THE STRENGTH AND THE FRAGILE, THE YOUTH AND MATURITY. AND THAT TOGETHER AS ASSUMPTION, THE KINGDOM BECOME REALITY MORE AND MORE EACH DAY IN US AND AROUND US.

3. PARTAGE AUTEUIL N° 87

Given the number of articles received, we have chosen to publish in this n° 86, the saints of two continents: the Americas and Africa.

Asia and Europe will appear in n° 87.

Thank you for your very rich and interesting contribution.

The editing team

4. A WORD FROM MARIE EUGENIE OF JESUS

My Holiness Can Come Only From Him

Retreat of January 1877

« 1st day. My first impression is that I must go higher; keep myself near to God in Jesus Christ, bring everything there, take from there events, occupations and everything else; not let myself be troubled by what passes, not desire either human aid for spiritual things, nor things which happen to me, but go to God for all my needs and bring him into everything I have to do.

...

3rd day. I meditated and prayed at length on knowing Jesus Christ. His holiness faced with my sinfulness, but above all his mercy and pity, his pardon to which I should trust myself; his desire to help my smallest efforts, to give me the will and the deed; his pleasure even at seeing me at his feet to receive from Him everything that I lack and so that his grace can flow in me.

...

7th day. ... The Last Supper. Once more this thought has struck me: in his great gift of love, Jesus asks for holiness. If I do not wash your feet, you can have no part with me. ^(In. 13:8) The one who is clean needs only that his feet be washed. Every word of the Discourse at the Last Supper is as much about holiness as about love. How divine that is! This bread, which is bread no longer, is a divine fire. I will prepare myself to receive it as a light that wants to penetrate everything in me. I adored Jesus in this gift of himself, rich in all holiness.

*8^{ème} jour. ... Oh! One must purify oneself, remove one's feet from all that covers it, work to make one's self-gift righteous, sincere and generous!... May I consent, may I cooperate with His action. My **holiness** can come only from Him. May I entrust myself especially to His love, to the great means that is prayer, knowing how to persevere when it costs me.*

...

My retreat resolution is to adore the sanctity and the love in Our Lord, to try to put that sanctity in my life by fidelity to grace and a limitless trust in Jesus' love for me, to pray as much as possible, and for that to keep to the times that the Rule gives us for the Office and Prayer, to respond to the love which the Savior has deigned to show me by loving him and loving others in imitation of him.

May God be blessed; I feel that he has shown great mercy to me.

Marie Eugenie of Jesus
NI.233/01, January 1877