

Christmas letter from Fr. Charles

Christmas, 2008

Dear Friends,



On behalf of our community I have the pleasure of again writing to you and wishing you and your families the joy and happiness of the Christmas season. Each year we are gifted by God who sent His Son for our redemption. But do we take that gift for granted and like so many other gifts we receive, a few short weeks later, we put it in a drawer or closet and it drops out of sight? God's gift is with us daily and you are remembered in our weekly Mass for those in our Seminary Association and for our friends and benefactors.

Like every year we can point to highlights and expectations for the coming year, for example:

- The visit of Bros. Eric Nkoko, CJ and Roger Mingashanga, CJ from Oct. 2007- June, 2008 in October was a blessing for them and us. On their return to Africa they started their 3 year Theology course leading to priesthood. Fr. Felix (ordained in June, 2008 is now novice master in Ilebo with 5 novices; Bro. Willy is living in Belgium where he studying Theology in Leuven. Bros. Franklin and Michel are studying Theology in Kinshasa, and hope to be ordained in June, 2009.
- Fr. Robert Hamilton, CJ, our Superior General, came for a visit this past October. He spent the month in Santa Barbara while Fr. Ludo was on vacation and became quite busy at Holy Cross parish living with Frs. Alfred and Tom. But while here he conducted a Day of Recollection for our Associates.
- Our Associates have made a lot of progress this year. We have now developed a "Constitution" and have elected a temporary slate of officers to lead the growing group which hopes to add more members. They have created, with Fr. Roberts help, a Formation Booklet for new members. And they took part in the first-ever joint weekend retreat with our sister congregation's Associates at the Daughters of Mary and Joseph Retreat house in Palos Verdes. We have plans to make this an annual retreat.
- Regretfully, Fr. Alphonse Bongo, CJ who was with us for a time decided he wanted to continue his Ph.D. studies and so has returned to Canada where he was prior to coming to us.
- But the good news is that on Nov. 24th we welcomed Fr. Alidor Mikobi, C.J. who has joined our Region from Africa. Under the new program begun this past summer at our meeting, Fr. Alidor is hoping to be with us for 5 years. His initial visa is for 3 years but we hope to renew it. He is living here at SLDM and will focus on learning English, and will assist in a variety of priestly ministries here and both in local parishes and Marian Hospital.

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Associates* 

- And you continued to respond to our appeal for the African Endowment Fund - both at St. Louis de Montfort and at Holy Cross in Santa Barbara. And this year Fr. Tom made an appeal at St. Joseph's Church in Carpinteria. The Endowment Fund, which is the primary fundraiser we conduct each year, but there are other donations to different projects in Africa of which you have generously responded to. The total amount you have contributed this past year was \$31,303.50, a true sign of your concerns for our confreres in Africa who depend on the interest of the Endowment for their daily living costs. Please pray for them as they continue to find new struggles which challenge them; but they are men of faith.

On behalf of all of us, I wish you the blessings of this coming Christmas Season.

Sincerely

Rev. Charles Hofschulte, C.J.
Regional Superior

