



# Spiritans in Ethiopia



**እንኳን ለብርሃን ልደቱ አደረሳችሁ!**  
**A Happy Christmas and a blessed New Year!**

"We believe that God made good his promise by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe, born poor in a little village, who left his home and was always on safari doing good, curing people by the power of God, teaching about God and man, showing the meaning of religion is love. He was rejected by his people, tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross, and died. He lay buried in the grave, but the hyenas did not touch him, and on the third day, he rose from the grave. He ascended to the skies. He is the Lord."  
From the "Maasai Creed"



In November we were privileged to have back in Ethiopia for the third time Fr Frans Timmermans, from the Province of the Netherlands. His first visit to Ethiopia took place 32 years ago, when he visited us as Superior General. Two of us were still here to recall the occasion, Iede de Lange in Yabello and Martin Kelly in Dimeka. But for all, old hands and new, Frans gave a fresh and inspiring look into Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, beginning with his persecution of the new Jesus people, taking us through his Damascus experience, his "novitiate" in Arabia and Syria, and finally, his active ministry. Frans beautifully linked together the account from the Acts of the Apostles with Paul's own writ-

ings along with the history and geography of the time, particularly for Paul's three missionary journeys, bringing to the fore the humanity of Paul, as well as the tremendous obstacles he faced from all sides, not just from outside the church but also from within. Not forgetting Paul's prayer and mysticism and what "he wrote after he died". Suffering from the altitude, Frans could borrow the words of Paul to Timothy: "I fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." We are very grateful to Frans for visiting us again and also for allowing us to share his talks with all of you. Feel free to share them with others. See also Page 4. Hartelijk bedankt, Frans!



Kilimpe Garbicha, David Opondo, Dennis Bukenya, Frans Timmermans, Iede de Lange, Kenneth Iwunna, Michael Ramesh, Gerald Kimata, Anthony Nweke, Michael Kasia.

All of Frans' talks on Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, are available in mp3 format on our website: [www.score-et.org](http://www.score-et.org)

## Celebrating new beginnings.



Kilimpe Garbicha, Anthony Nweke and Dennis Bukenya receive the blessing of all.

Multiple events took place in Dhaddiim for the anniversary of our founder, Poullart des Places, on 2<sup>nd</sup> of October. Firstly, the handing over from the old to the new Council. Secondly, the arrival of three new missionaries in Borana was marked. Finally, Iede de Lange's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated, the latter a bit differently from normal. While Iede was returning to Yabello for a night's sleep his pickup got stuck in a flooded sandy river bed, a result of the plentiful rains blessing most of Ethiopia this year. And there he stayed for the night. Next morning a message by motorcycle got the rescuers out of bed early and, and with Iede none the worse for wear, he having slept well, the ceremonies took place. We began with Mass and the blessing of the new Council members, the missioning of the two new Spiritans to Borana, David Opondo from Kenya and Kenneth Iwunna from Nigeria and of Sr Finolia, Sister of Charity from India, then the planting of an avocado tree to mark our transition from Foundation to Group, following by a fine meal and music. Many thanks to the Dhaddiim community for organising the celebration, to their customary high standard.

*Ad multos annos!*

## Farewells

For Spiritan students the time of missionary experience "is ideally suited to a practical initiation into inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue." From a practical point of view Mauritius is a perfect place for this with its mixture of Hindu, Christian and Muslim populations. And particularly with the role played over 150 years ago by our confrere, Blessed Jacques Laval. His legacy lives on. So it was with gratitude to our confreres in Mauritius for accepting him that we formally said farewell to Hagos Hailu on October 13<sup>th</sup>. On the way he was hospitably received by our confreres in The Seychelles as he overnighted there. Again, many thanks. We wish Hagos a happy and fruitful time in Mauritius and pray he will be blessed by his following in the steps of Laval and the many heroic confreres who have laboured in the heat of the sun.



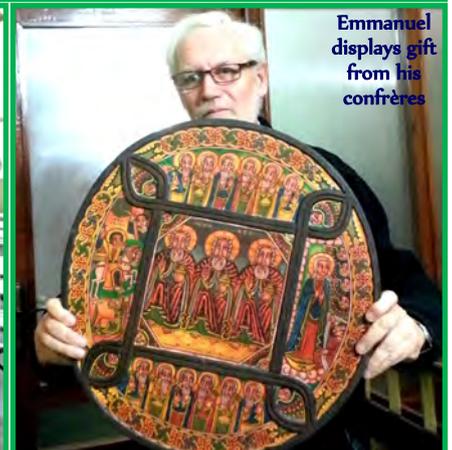
Hagos Hailu

It was with sadness that he is leaving us and in gratitude for all he has done for Spiritans in Ethiopia and for the church at large that two days after our retreat we gathered in Addis Ababa with many of his friends to wish Bon Voyage to Emmanuel Fritsch as he returns home to France after 29 years in Ethiopia. He arrived here in 1985, ten years after having been originally appointed to Ethiopia. After fifteen years in Gamo Gofa he transferred to Addis Ababa where he further deepened his studies of the Ethiopian tradition. As the letter on page three eloquently testifies his achievements have been many and appreciated far and wide, most recently this summer when he lectured in Yale University. We wish Emmanuel the best and look forward to his visits in the future.

*Au revoir!*



Fr Dennis leads the community in prayer over Sr Finolia and Frs Kenneth and David



Emmanuel displays gift from his confrères

Council of Hierarchs  
Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea

Most Reverend  
Fr Martine Kelly  
Superior  
Spiritan Fathers  
Addis Ababa – Ethiopia

Re: Vote of Gratitude to Abba Emmanuel Fritsch.

October 30, 2014

Dear Most Reverend Fr. Kelly,

Greetings to you and the Spiritan Fathers working in Ethiopia.

The Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea gathered together for the Council of Hierarchs to discuss and deliberate on the liturgical texts of their apostolic tradition in consultation with the Episcopal Liturgical committees of Ethiopia and Eritrea were taken by surprise to learn that Abba Emmanuel Fritsch has been assigned to France after a life-long dedicated service to our Apostolic Church of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

You know how much the Bishops of Ethiopia and Eritrea appreciate the work, dedication, scholarly research and example of life of Abba Emmanuel Fritsch. We would have liked to have him with us for a longer period and indeed until the end of his days as he has identified himself with us in all things but skin. If this is an irreversible decision however we would plead with you to allow him to continue being an effective member of the Episcopal Liturgical Committee of Ethiopia and Eritrea with all the rights and responsibilities which entails.

The liturgical texts we have come to discuss and deliberate upon in Rome are the outcome of his scholarly research in collaboration with other local and missionary scholars. His Encyclopedic knowledge of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Christian cultural and apostolic heritage has enriched our liturgical texts greatly. We know how committed he is to Church teaching and to the Magisterium. To this end he has endured difficult times of trial and misunderstanding in some quarters. His main concern however has always been to implement faithfully the directive of Vatican II. Thanks to his dedicated effort our Church today also is gradually discovering her true identity and is heading towards the right direction.

We do not intend to give Abba Emmanuel a sendoff because we still consider him one of us sharing our joys and sorrows wherever he may be and because we truly believe that even if he is physically far from us his heart is still with us and our heart is also with him. We want him to continue as a prominent member of the Liturgical committee.

With gratitude and thanks,

Yours sincerely,

The Bishops of Eritrea and Ethiopia

+ Menghestab Tesfayohannes  
Eparch of Asmara

+ Abune Tesfayohannes Medhin  
+ Abba Kidane  
+ Abba Basile, Bishop of Suvaliba  
+ Arfikemariam Jitagos

## Spiritans Retreat in Ethiopia, November 4 – 11 2014

### Frans Timmermans CSSp

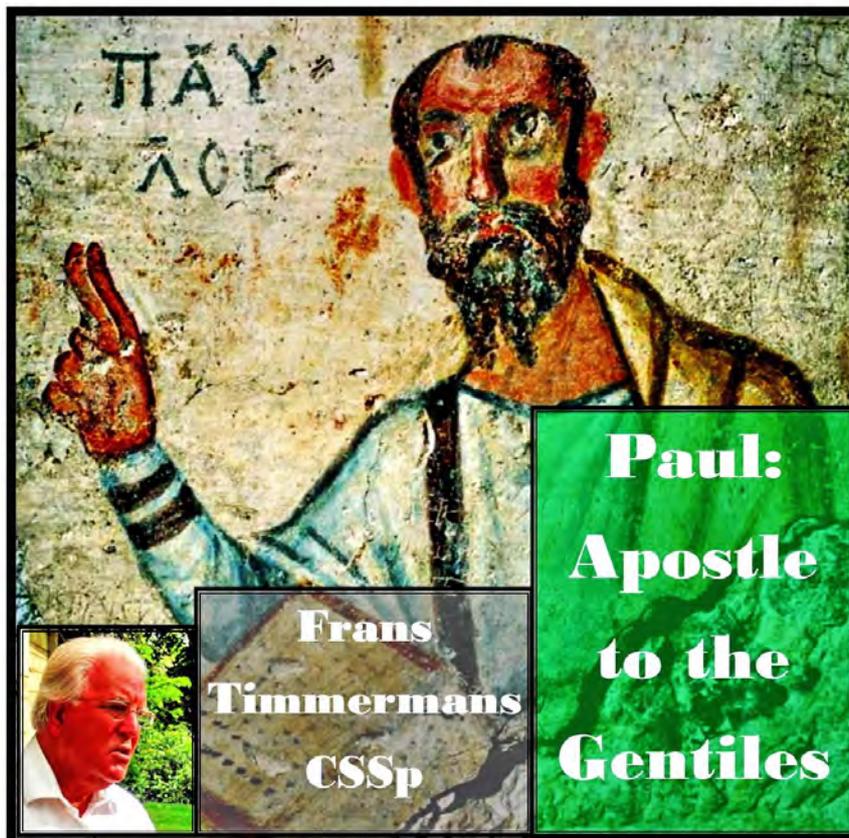
Although I considered it a bit of a risky business to undertake a journey to Ethiopia on the eve of my 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, I nevertheless plucked up my courage – and no regrets! My last visit to Ethiopia (Borana) was four years ago and I noticed a lot of changes, especially personnel-wise. Six new African confreres, all young, that makes a big difference. The group in Arba Minch – Gamo Gofa, arrived in 1972 and opted for close collaboration with the local Orthodox Church – one of the oldest in the world! They are also involved in development work, where possible together with the Orthodox. Several of them have left since and one more is about to leave: Emmanuel Fritch, by the end of November. Emmanuel Fritsch is the real expert in the group who is fully immersed in the Orthodox church of Ethiopia. He has been called back to France to become parish priest of the Orthodox community in Lyon.

Two Irish confreres remain in Gamo Gofa: Martin Kelly is in Dimeka and Paddy Moran is in Arba Minch. The latter is presently on a well-earned sabbatical. Dennis Bukenya from Uganda is the new Group Superior and is parish priest and student pastor in Arba Minch. He is the first Spiritan from Africa to lead the Spiritans in Ethiopia.

Two Spiritan students, Michael Kasia from Kenya and Michael Ramesh from India, are presently doing a language course in Addis. Michael Kasia is to join the Gamo Gofa community, Michael Ramesh will go to Borana. In addition there is Tewodros Awala in second theology in Nairobi and Hagos Hailu doing missionary experience in Mauritius

At the same time as the group that went to Gamo Gofa, in '72, a Dutch/American group arrived in southern Ethiopia, some 200 kms from Gamo Gofa, to work among the Borana, a nomadic pastoral people. They opted for the evangelisation of a people who had not yet been in much contact with Christianity. It was an answer to a call of the 1968 General Chapter to re-engage in first evangelisation. Of that original group five have died already, the last one

of whom was Fr. Ton Leus in 2007. Iede de Lange is the sole survivor. He has been pulling the cart now for over 40 years. His health is still good, so he says, but not without causing some problems. Seven African confreres have joined him, two of them are Borana themselves, proceeding from that young Christian community. That means that in the past four years almost the entire group in Borana has been renewed. Antony Nweke, Kenneth Iwunna, both from Nigeria, David Opondo and Gerald Kimata from Kenya are among them. All those young men look strong and committed. All together 16 confreres.



Click on this icon on our website's ([www.score-et.org](http://www.score-et.org)) homepage and you will be able to download all of Frans Timmermans's eleven talks on St Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles.

Apart from the pastoral work among the Borana, education is equally a fulltime job for the Spiritans there: it is the official title for their residence permit. They run several schools and hostels for students who live too far from school or whose parents are on the move with their cattle. This is a great financial burden for the Spiritans, and they depend much on external donors. This is a major concern for them: how to diminish this financial dependence?

Our Spiritan House in Addis (situated just beside the brand-new Conference Centre of the African Union) is

not big enough to receive the entire group – so a pastoral centre was booked in a neighbouring diocese, 250 kms from Addis. That is not so far – still it took us five hours to get there, and five hours to return. The road is not bad—except in the immediate neighbourhood of Addis— but all the same: there are still enough potholes to produce clouds of dust and to cause slaloms. All the time there are cattle, horses, donkeys and goats in the middle of the road, as well as donkey carts and a kind of motorized rickshaws used as taxis. The pastoral centre has a number of nice and functional buildings, with beautiful lawns and splendid flowers: the rainy season was just over – that was why everything was so green. The accommodation was good and so was the kitchen, but soon we noticed that most of the time there was no running water, so we had to manage with buckets and wash-basins. The electric power was equally capricious, but nobody seemed to bother: it is the daily reality, at least there where our confreres live and work. What really bothered me was the altitude of the place, more than 2000 metres above sea level: a fortnight of gasping for air. Once back in the Low Lands (Nederland) that was over. The evenings and the nights were really cold.

Ten confreres took part in the retreat, seven of them Africans. It was a pleasant group. The theme was: Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles. It is quite special to meditate on the beginnings of the Church with people who themselves are assisting in the birth of a church, hardly 30 years old, alongside one of the oldest church in the world, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Much is recognisable in the Acts and the letters of Paul. Paul himself is an original source of inspiration.

Beginning in 1972 with endless patience and respect for an unknown culture, they took long years of contacts and getting used to each other in order to get to know the people, their traditions and values. Slowly the biblical values have been grafted upon these and quite an original Christian community has developed. A slow growth, perhaps, but the roots have been sunk deep. It is amazing how from a church that is so young, already two Borana Spiritans have come. That really looks like Paul's early communities! Actually, most new Christians come from the schools and hostels, but the rural faith community itself keeps growing as well.

I would like to thank the confreres for receiving me so fraternally and for the inspiration they gave me. Happy Christmas to all of you and best wishes for God's blessing over the new year!

## Maasai Creed

We believe in the one High God,  
who out of love created the beautiful world  
and everything good in it.  
He created Man and wanted Man to be happy in  
the world.

God loves the world and every nation and tribe  
on the Earth.

We have known this High God in darkness,  
and now we know him in the light.  
God promised in the book of his word, the Bible,  
that he would save the world  
and all the nations and tribes.

We believe that God made good his promise  
by sending his son, Jesus Christ,  
a man in the flesh, a Jew by tribe,  
born poor in a little village,  
who left his home and was always on safari  
doing good,  
curing people by the power of God,  
teaching about God and man,  
showing the meaning of religion is love.  
He was rejected by his people,  
tortured and nailed hands and feet to a cross,  
and died.

He lay buried in the grave,  
but the hyenas did not touch him,  
and on the third day, he rose from the grave.  
He ascended to the skies.  
He is the Lord.

We believe that all our sins are forgiven through  
Him.

All who have faith in Him must be sorry for  
their sins,  
be baptized in the Holy Spirit of God,  
live the rules of love  
and share the bread together in love,  
to announce the Good News to others  
until Jesus comes again.

We are waiting for Him.

He is alive.

He lives.

This we believe.

Amen.

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