



Spiritans in Ethiopia



Feast of the Holy Cross—September 27, 2014

Surprisingly, the feast of the Holy Cross on September 27, is officially a 2nd Class Feast, though in reality its celebration ranks with the major feasts of the Resurrection at Easter and the Epiphany of the Lord at his Baptism (January 19). It occurs at the end of the rainy season and so anticipates the harvest. It commemorates the Discovery of the True Cross by St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. The Eve of the feast is marked by huge bonfires, often with parishes combining to add to the occasion. Mesqal (Cross) Square in Addis Abeba is packed for the occasion with the lighting of the bonfire its high-



light. The reason for the bonfires is the belief that St Helena's final clue as to the location of the True Cross was indicated by the smoke from a fire.

In hand crosses in particular—carried by all priests to bless the faithful—there is a square or diamond at the base, symbolising both the Ark of the Covenant, believed to have been brought to Ethiopia from Jerusalem by the Queen of Sheba, and the tomb of Adam, thought to have been located at the foot of Christ's cross.

**"He bore our sins in his body on the tree...
By his wounds you have been healed"**

At our recent Enlarged Council in Arba Minch Fr Bukenya Dennis Ssebuggwawo (lower right) was elected Superior. He was born in 1968 in Uganda. Having done his Philosophical studies in Arusha and novitiate at Lushoto, in Tanzania, he made his first profession in 1998. He did his theological studies at Enugu Spiritan International School of Theology, Nigeria and made his final profession and diaconal ordination in Nairobi in 2002. He was ordained in Kampala in 2003. His mission appointment was in Aba Diocese, Nigeria, and then in Mulagu Parish in Kampala Archdiocese in Uganda. In 2010 he came to Ethiopia and has been Parish Priest in the Parish of St Simeon, Arba Minch, for the past three years. His fellow council members are Brendan Cogavin (Ireland), Anthony Nweke (Nigeria) and Kilimpe Garbicha (Ethiopia).
"Be strong and of good courage... I will be with you." (Deut. 31:23)

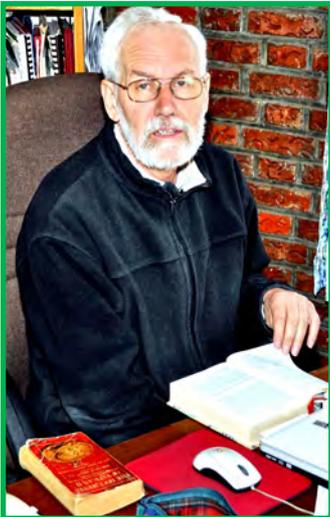


Left to Right: John Laizer, Philippe Sidot, Martin Kelly, Florentine Mallya, Hagos Hailu, Brendan Cogavin (C), Dennis Bukenya, Tewodros Awala, Dida Wario, Joe Shio, Iede de Lange, Michael Kasia, Gerard Nnamunga, Kenneth Iwunna, David Opondo, John Mbinda, Gerald Kimata, Anthony Nweke (C), Kilimpe Garbicha (C), Michael Ramesh.

With the same Respect Arba Minch—50 years

"Reconstruire ensemble - Rebuild together"

Emmanuel Fritsch CSSp



I spent two weeks in Lebanon two years ago on the occasion of a congress of the Society for Oriental Liturgy. This journey in one of the most troubled areas of the globe turned out to be a pilgrimage. Indeed I felt to be involved in a special encounter with the humanity of Jesus Christ through several persons. Among these, I would like to mention Abuna Maroun Attallah; Abuna Boulos Feghaly; Bishop Georges Casmoussa; Abuna Saliba, a Maronite priest deceased only a few weeks earlier, who was the father of

friends I made; Abuna Jad, a young monk of Kaslik University of the Holy Spirit and many more.

Circumstances made it that I had the occasion to attend the jubilee of priestly ordination of Bishop Georges Casmoussa at the Syro-Catholic patriarchal cathedral of Charfet. Friends, and the book of his story he wrote and gave me, explained to me who he is. He is an Iraqi who was bishop of Mossoul a few years back when he was kidnapped and kept prisoner for a number of weeks by Islamists. They pretended to kill him with a knife at his throat several times before they eventually decided to free him. A quiet serenity, a sense of an incredible inner freedom, emanate from him. It gives the impression that he has nothing to lose any more, like someone already beyond this life.

Abuna Maroun is a monk in a small Antonine monastery. Eighty four years old and leading the movement "Reconstruire ensemble - Rebuild together", he is respected for his integrity and is famous all over Lebanon as someone who has always tried to bring factions, ethnicities and religious groups together. Even when they were right in the midst of terrible fighting during the long Lebanese war, he was going on the barricades to talk to fighters there. I asked him what brought him to take on this form of ministry. He withdrew into himself for a long moment, then started to speak in a very low voice, like a whisper. Eventually, he said with simplicity: *"It was our mother, in our village. At times, she used to say: 'Speak quietly: the Eucharist is being celebrated in the church'. At other times, she would say with the same respect: 'Speak quietly: the sheikh is praying!'"* Abuna Maroun kept silent for a while, then he repeated slowly: *"With the same respect"*.

Golden Jubilee

On September 6th Arba Minch celebrated its fifty years of existence in the presence of the Ethiopian Prime Minister and many other visitors. Established near the forty springs which give it its name, Arba Minch is located in the Rift Valley in the South West of Ethiopia, 450 kms from Addis Ababa. When the Spiritans came here 42 years ago the town had a population of about 25,000. Now it has over 100,000, a university with almost 20,000 students in four campuses, up from 179 in 1979, an airport built to receive international flights, a three lane dual carriageway joining Shecha and Seqala, as well as a new bridge going directly through from Seqala to Limat and the University's main campus.

Originally made up of two towns five kms apart these have long become one. As well as the university campuses another noticeable development has been the building of several modern hotels and lodges to cater for the many tourists now visiting Arba Minch and the local Nechisar National Park as well as Lake Abaya to the north and Lake Chamo to the south. Further south you have the Omo Valley 300 kms away, now reachable mostly on asphalted roads, another major development.

Arba Minch must almost be the centre of the banana growing industry in Ethiopia with an estimated 100 tons leaving each day for cities all over the country. The two lakes provide wonderful Nile Perch and Tilapia fish as well as viewing of crocodiles, hippos and bird life. The visit to Chamo Lake is the highlight for many tourists. The biggest employer in the town is Arba Minch Textile Factory, now under new management and working 24 hours a day.

Based on the 2007 census, in Arba Minch the majority of the inhabitants are Orthodox with 56.04% of the population, 38.47% are Protestants, and 4.16% are Muslim. The Catholic population is mostly made up of university students. The extraordinary growth of Arba in recent years makes one wonder what it will be like in fifty years time. We are very happy to have been part of most of its first fifty years, and are looking forward to the centenary!



Augustine O'Keeffe and Harry Mullin, founders of Arba Minch Mission—1972

Formation & Graduation — Dennis Bukenya CSSp

COURSE OF FORMATORS AT THE INSTITUTE OF FORMATION FOR FORMATORS ADDIS ABABA

It has been a great opportunity to attend this course. Thursday 14th August 2014 was a great day when 24 formators graduated from the Institute of Formation for Formators Addis Ababa. These are the first fruits of the Institute. The occasion was presided over by the His Grace Abuna Berhaneyesus Souraphel, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Addis Ababa, who is the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ethiopia and Chairman of AMECEA..

On Monday 9th July 2012 the Institute of Formation for Formators was opened at CMRS premises in Addis Ababa. On this day 35 new students reported to the Institute from 24 different Catholic religious congregations working in Ethiopia and one diocesan priest. These students composed of seven nationalities; Ethiopian, Ugandan, Indian, Tanzanian, Kenyan, Bangladeshi and Ecuadorian. The coordinators, Br. Hugo Verhulst BGW, Sr. Weynsht Tadesse CMS and Sr Tezrinha Esperanza MSC spearheaded the beginning of the institute. The program of studies covers three summers. The program includes the following courses: Church History of Religious life, Vocational Ministry, Youth Ministry, Prayer, Scripture, Church's Teaching in Vatican II Documents & Papal Encyclicals, Intensive Journaling, Spirituality of Religious life & Vows, Structures & Dynamics of Personality, Human Development, Vocational Colloquial Accompaniment, Spirituality, Discernment, Formation and Group Dynamics, Human Development – Affectivity & Sexuality, Ethiopian Spirituality and Liturgy of the Oriental Rite, Canon Law, Discernment in Social Action, Human Dynamics and Psychopathology, then Vocational Interviewing and Accompaniment. Throughout we have received different professors



Archbishop Berhaneyesus, Metropolitan of Addis Ababa, congratulates Fr Dennis Bukenya CSSp

from different countries who specialize in these different disciplines.

Eighty percent of our expectations at the beginning of the course showed that we have joined the institute in order to get skills and methods of forming those who want to join religious life and priesthood. But we found out that the course is designed in a way that is not aiming at giving us skills to form others but it is intended to form us. "You cannot give what you do not have, thus you cannot help in the formation of another person unless you are formed." So the methodology has proved that we have been doing our second novitiate for the three years 2012-2014. In our evaluation it is clear that this course is worthwhile not only for the religious but also the diocesan priests. Hence more encouragement goes to all the Eparchies, Vicariates and Dioceses in Ethiopia to send the people who are working in the seminaries and formation houses to the Institute of Formation for Formators. Beyond the frontiers our expectation is that students from AMECEA region and beyond are given opportunity to join the institute. Gratitude to all who have contributed to the establishment and running of the Institute of Formation for Formators Addis Ababa and congratulations to the 24 pioneers who have graduated this year.



Graduates and staff

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