



# Spiritan Foundation of Ethiopia



## Farewell, Vince

Vince Stegman came to Ethiopia in 1975. After ordination he was appointed in 1963 to St Emma Military School (a secondary school) in Virginia where he taught for two years. From 1966 to 1975 he worked in Maasailand in Tanzania, during which time he taught for 3½ years in the diocesan seminary. During his time in Ethiopia he began in Dhadiim, our first mission in Boranaland. In 1981 he established a new mission in Dhoqqolle, in a remoter part of Boranaland. He ministered there till 1987 when he returned to the United States, where he worked as formator for the American Provinces in Chicago for three years. Following this he was pastor in St Mary Magdalene's Parish in Chicago for four years. The parish and the house of formation share the same building.

He returned to Ethiopia in 1994. He then opened a new mission in Yabello. This was primarily to cater for students of our mission schools in Borana who needed to come to Yabello to complete their secondary education. Vince worked there till 2007 when he returned to Dho-

qqolle where he remained for the rest of his time here. Here, as in all the other communities, he showed great dedication in very difficult circumstances. He will be greatly missed, not only by his confreres, but also by the

Borana people whom he served generously for thirty years. His knowledge and love of the Borana people, their culture and language, is an example to all missionaries. We will also miss his quiet presence and, at the most unexpected times, his subtle sense of humour.

When the Dutch/American and the Irish/French communities in Ethiopia became an International Group in 2001 Vince was appointed as our superior. He had previously served as superior of the Borana Major Community.

At the final night of our Chapter we had a farewell party for Vince and on behalf

of us all our youngest member, Kilimpe Garbicha (3<sup>rd</sup> theology, Langata) made Vince a presentation in recognition of his marvellous contribution to the Spiritan mission in Ethiopia and to wish him well in his new life.



## News Desk.

The last few months have been a season of meetings to each of which we sent a representative – Iede de Lange went to Tanzania's Provincial Chapter in Maua and Martin Kelly went to Kenya's Enlarged Council in Spiritan House, Langata. Our congratulations to Frs Joe Shio and Martin Keane on their re-elections. A warm welcome too and best wishes to Fr Gerald Nnamunga as he takes over the tiller of the Founda-



tion of Uganda

On top of these a meeting of the Union of Circumscriptions of Africa and the Islands (UCAI) in Dakar took place in mid-August. The latter is a bi-annual occurrence. Much thanks is due to Fr Yves-Marie Fradet, Superior of FANO, and his confreres, for their wonderful welcome.

Next time in Cameroon!

**First Foundation Chapter, Arba Minch, July 11-14, 2011**



Our first Foundation Chapter took place in Arba Minch from July 11-14<sup>th</sup>, facilitated by Fr John Kwofie, First Assistant to the Superior General, and moderated by Elochukwu Uzukwu CSSp of Duquesne University, along with Eamonn Brehony, a former Spiritan, who has many years experience doing development work in Africa and is now a consultant who is very familiar with Spiritan missions and well acquainted with the problems faced by missionary congregations. We thank them both for how well they led us through four very busy days.



**Eamonn Brehony**

Also present at the Chapter were representatives from our UCEAF family: Amandus Kapele from Tanzania, Martin Keane from Kenya and Domasius Kayemba from Uganda. Sean O’Leary, Mission Councillor, represented the Irish Province. Seventeen members of the Foundation were present. One of these, Vince Stegman, at seventy five, has since ‘retired’ to Duquesne.

One of the major decisions of the Chapter was to prepare a Strategic Plan for the whole Foundation, a new venture. We will be facilitated in this by Dr Eamonn Brehony, one of the moderators of our Chapter.

Beginning with a week-long workshop we hope to have it completed by late 2012.

Our Chapter wasn’t all hard work however. Each evening we were able to socialize, renewing old acquaintances and establishing new ones.

On the final afternoon we had opportunities to see either the crocodiles and hippos on Lake Chamo, view the magnificent Rift Valley from the mountains over Arba Minch town, or finally, to visit our mission in Chencha (2,700 metres above sea level) where a team of ethno-archaeologists and their students from the University of South Florida gave a very interesting presentation on their work in the locality over the last ten years or more.



**Elochukwu Uzukwu**

Something new for many of our visitors was their experience of the Ethiopian Rite liturgy – morning prayer one day and, on another, the Ethiopian Rite Eucharist, all in English, translated and published ten years ago by members of the Foundation. It has become the template for a newer translation in five languages.

Our thanks to Paddy Moran and Dennis Bukenya of Arba Minch who hosted us for the week. All enjoyed their hospitality and the warm welcome and we look forward to three years time when we will meet again — in “the heaven of the Rift Valley”.

## Foundation of Ethiopia Newsletter

### Desert Experience

We still have three confreres across the Jordan waiting their entry into the Promised Land. They are **Mathew Ngowi** from the Province of Tanzania, **David Opondo** from the Foundation of Kenya and **Kenneth Iwunna** from the Province of Nigeria South-East. Fortunately, Mathew was able to be with us for our Chapter. We assure them they are not forgotten and we are doing all we can to speed up their papers. Please do not shake the dust off your feet!



### Renewal of Vows

Congratulations to Kilimpe Garbicha Wako who renewed his commitment to the Congregation during our Chapter. Fr John Kwofie accepted on behalf of the Superior General.



Welcome back from Ireland to Brendan Cogavin who managed to get in some vacation after our Chapter. And just in time to help with the producing of the Chapter documents!



We wish all our confreres and Spiritan friends a very happy feast-day on October 2nd, the 302nd anniversary of the death of our founder, Claude François Poullart des Places.



Congratulations to **Gerald Kimata** (Dubluq), **Anthony Nweke**, **Jude Kiggala** (both Dhadim) and **Denis Mugalula** (Yabello) who have completed their Oromo language course and taken up their assignments in Boranaland. Well done! Now for the easy part!



### BEYOND THE LANGUAGE

#### “THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH ETHIOPIAN LANGUAGES”

**Dennis Bukenya CSSp**

Most missionaries encounter the challenge of learning a new language especially when they are appointed to a new mission *ad extra*. Some put a lot of emphasis on how to learn the new language while others may even be reluctant to go to the mission *ad extra* because of the challenges of learning a new language. The Foundation of Ethiopia received with great pleasure six missionaries from different countries in 2010. The first challenge was learning one of the two dominant languages of Ethiopia, Amharic and Oromifa. In October 2010, these six young missionaries were admitted to the Joint School of Languages Addis Ababa which belongs to Mekane Yesus Church. Our interest and zeal was to learn these new languages but the first experience through the method of Growing Participator Approach (GPA) showed us that beyond the language there is always a human person. This human person who exists within a culture is the most important aspect of our stay and work in Ethiopia. Hence the primary interest of a newly-appointed missionary should not only be to concentrate on learning the new language but also on how to interact with the local people. Language is a tool to help a missionary to reach the human person. Hence making an effort to learn the new language without getting to know the people or being interested in the language and not interested in the people always makes the missionary miss the target. That is why Craig Storti in his book *The Art of Crossing Cultures* says that “whatever their goals and responsibilities, it is difficult to imagine how they can succeed if they can’t interact effectively with the people from the local culture. And yet a great many expatriates cannot.” Therefore the GPA method helps the expatriates to get the local language so that you can get into the people’s life, thus the emphasis is: “Don’t learn the language! Rather, discover a new world, as it is known and shared by the people among whom you are living.” GPA is a new method that was developed by Greg and Angela Thomson and is used in many language schools today, the Joint School of Languages Addis Ababa included.

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Happy birthday to

- September 09: Jude Kiggala
- October 03 Iede de Lange
- October 04 Paddy Moran
- October 06 Boniface Muema
- November 03 Mathew Ngowi
- December 22 Martin Kelly



Food for thought

Did the woman say,  
When she held him for the first time  
in the dark of the stable,  
after the pain of the bleeding and the crying,  
“This is my body, this is my blood”?

Did the woman say,  
when she held him for the last time  
in the dark rain on a hilltop,  
after the pain and the bleeding and the dying,  
“This is my body, this is my blood”?

Well that she said it to him then,  
for dry old men,  
brocaded robes belying barrenness,  
ordain that she should not say it for him now.

Frances Croake Frank

“In youth the days are short and the years are long; in old age the years are short and the days long.”

Nikita Ivanovich Panin

“Inflation is when you pay fifteen dollars for the ten-dollar haircut you used to get for five dollars when you had hair.”

Sam Ewing

New Council

Our new Council is made up of Martin Kelly (Superior, Dimeka), Dida Wario (Assistant, Dubluq), Dennis Bukenya, (Secretary, Arba Minch) and Brendan Cogavin (Bursar, Addis Ababa).



In June, Hagos Hailu Weldemichael went to the UCEAF novitiate in Magamba in Tanzania. Hagos comes from Tigray in the North of Ethiopia and completed his philosophy in the Diocese of Adigrat seminary.



እንቁጣጣሽ — Happy New Year

On Monday, September the 12th, 2011, we have Ethiopian New Year, 2004, here. We move from the Year of Luke, 2003, to the Year of John, 2004. The Year of Luke is a Leap Year and so the 13th month of the year has 6 days. In using the slogan “Thirteen Months of Sunshine” to promote tourism Ethiopia takes advantage of its unique calendar.

Our Newest Member

Our newest arrival to the country is Sebastian Samikannu from India. He arrived in July, just in time for our Chapter. He will do two years of PEP. Presently he is learning Borana in Addis Ababa. Sebastian has studied philosophy and worked in computer data-basing. We wish him a fruitful and happy Pastoral Experience with us in Ethiopia.



“Come and See”

On September 8 and 9 we had a two-day “Come and See” in Spiritan House, Addis Ababa, with four applicants wishing to join the Congregation. We plan on having more during the year in various houses.

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## Foundation of Ethiopia Newsletter

### Background of Ethiopian Languages

(Continued from Page 3) Ethiopia is a multiethnic country with many ethnic groups who speak different languages. According to Sarah Howard there are 83 major languages and more than 200 dialects. Amharic and Tigrinya are the major Semitic languages; Oromifa and Somali are the main Cushitic languages. Among these languages Amharic and Oromifa seems to be the dominant languages spoken and understood by the majority of the Ethiopian population. Amharic uses the Ge'ez alphabet while Oromifa uses the Latin alphabet. Ethiopia has a longstanding Christian heritage and a very rich history which gives a great pride to the people of Ethiopia. Sarah Howard in her book "Culture Smart Ethiopia" describes Ethiopia's dominant culture as Orthodox Christian, highland-based and using Amharic as its first or second language. The official language of the federal government of Ethiopia has been Amharic. It is used as the official state language while English is used as an official foreign language. Amharic is widely used as the *lingua franca* and is a common language especially in Addis Ababa and in several Northern, Southern and Western regional states. It was once universally taught in schools as the national language during the time of Emperor Haile Selassie. Amharic is written in the Ge'ez script, which is derived from an ancient South Arabian alphabet; it is a hard language to learn especially for foreigners. Its script (ፊደል Fidel) is like Arabic or Hebrew, which uses a system of phonetic consonants with extra markings for vowels. Each letter represents a syllable consisting of a basic consonant with a vowel added to it. There are more than 224 possible written letters, made up by multiplying each of the thirty two consonants by seven variants denoting the seven different vowels sounds (e.g. for the letter *b*: ቦ ቦ፡ ቦ፡፡ ባ ባ፡ ባ፡፡). Unlike Arabic and Hebrew it is written from left to right. The language has explosive sounds, which are always hard for foreigners to pronounce. This language has a unique structure of grammar hence you have to learn it the way it is presented to you. The more you try to use the English grammar to learn Amharic the more you will fail to get the language. Hence the GPA will point it out to you clearly that you do not need to use another language in order to learn Amharic. Therefore you have to learn Amharic in Amharic. In Amharic, being a Semitic language, one will find many words whose roots come from Arabic or Hebrew. Like any other language many words have as well been incorporated into Amharic from other foreign languages like

French, English, Italian to mention but a few.

Sarah Howard tells us that, the ethnic makeup of Ethiopia is mainly composed of the Semitic (Amhara, Tigray, Gurage .... and Harar ), the Cushitic (Oromo, Somali and Afar) and the Nilotic (Nuer and Anuak). The Ethiopians are a mixture of African and Middle Eastern peoples forming several distinctive nations and ethnic groups with different types of culture. In the west near Sudan we find the Nilotic ethnic groups, in the South and East there are various Cushitic ethnic groups, the majority of whom are cattle-rearing Oromos who have migrated northwards. Then we have the nomadic camel-keeping Somalis who straddle the South-East border with Somalia. Lastly in the north we find the Semitic-speaking and sedentary Amharas and Tigreans who define the Christian heartland.

### First experience in learning a new language in Ethiopia.

The new missionaries always have fears and a little tension within themselves and have questions like: "Shall I succeed in learning these new languages? Will these new people accept me? How am I going to survive in this new place?" When we arrived in Ethiopia the only thing we could hear were the sounds but we couldn't make any meaning out of them and there was no communication at all with the local people. This became a great obstacle for interaction since a number of Ethiopians especially upcountry, can only speak Amharic and their local dialects. English is not a common media of communication in Ethiopia when you are working in the rural areas. I remember during my first week in Ethiopia when we visited the Spiritan missions in Borana; the first morning I woke up very early and I asked the housemaid for some water in English and there was no communication. She responded in a language of I could not comprehend even a single word. Up to now I cannot tell whether it was Oromifa or Amharic. I tried to communicate by signs but still I couldn't go any further. At last I gave up with some little confusion and disappointment, then went back in my bedroom and kept quiet. Another confrere for his first time in a restaurant, after the communication failure with the waiter he had to use sign language and moo like a cow in order to get milk. Many people in the restaurant wondered and others



Dennis Bukenya CSSP

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were laughing but that is the challenge missionary life.

The encountering of new people in the mission normally goes with some suspicions. There is always an ongoing anxiety inside a person how to communicate to the other people but with some mixed feelings: Will she/he understand me? Shall I be accepted by the other person? If not, what next? That is why Craig Storti puts it to us that *“since language is one of the principle means through which you can manipulate and control your environment and thereby enjoy a sense of well-being and security, then the lack of language, not surprisingly, is one of the main reasons for feeling so helpless and vulnerable during the first few months in the mission abroad. One of the greatest allies the expatriate has in the quest to become culturally adapted is the ability to speak the local language”*.

The first day we appeared in class it was the same situation of feelings of fear, suspicions and tension. We entered the classroom with our books and pens ready to begin learning the new language but to our surprise the set up was different; we encountered plates, glasses and bottles on the table. We enjoyed the drinks and the edibles and later on we learnt that GPA recommends that the first encounter with your nurturer (teacher) shouldn't be an academic event but a social event like a party, potluck or dinner. This helps you to reduce the tension and then interact with ease, understand one another and develop a team spirit of mutual support in this journey of learning a new language. Instead of finding a teacher in the class we met a nurturer who was to nurture us so that we could grow into the new language, interact with the new people and finally be able to participate in the Ethiopian society. We proudly entered the class as new students, only later to find out that we are growing participants (GPs), not students anymore. The GPA method will always emphasize to you that: *“What language is all about is becoming a growing member in a new community.”*

The first phase was really challenging because it is the silent phase with strict rules *“no talking at all in class, no writing anymore; no reading is needed; just listen to the new language and develop the ability to learn new vocabularies.”* Our pens and books became useless. This process makes you be a baby in the new culture because when a baby is learning a language he/she doesn't begin with writing, reading or talking but hearing sounds and later on she learns how to listen and give these sounds meaning and finally the baby starts using

them in speech. Writing and reading comes at later stages of development. It is believed that one can learn a new language faster and acquire more vocabulary when one begins by listening rather than talking, writing or reading.

Apart from class work there are many other exercises that we have been engaged in during the language course. We have had a number of field trips to different places in and outside Addis Ababa as part of getting to know the people, their language and culture, their work and life, their roots and history, then the geography with all its beautiful mountain scenery etc. Everyday there is time for devotional prayers where all of us from different denominations and different countries come together as children of God, offer our



Learning vocabulary hands-on

prayers to the Lord and listen to his Word. This has been a good spiritual enriching exercise and at the same time helping us to discover how Ethiopians express their encounter with the Almighty God in prayers. One thing that impressed me when praying "Our Father", is that in the place of "our daily bread" Ethiopians will say "our daily injera" (አገጅራ). They use the name of their local food, made out of the *Teff* cereal.

We always have time for socializing with a cup of coffee or tea during break with the nurturers and our fellow growing participants. During our free time we have been visiting the families of our nurturers and hosting them whenever they have free time to visit us in our community. We visited as well our fellow growing participants several times and hosted them in our community. All the above activities have been helpful for us to grow into the language, the culture and life of the people so that we can interact and participate in the Ethiopian society. We take this to the base of our mission and life in Ethiopia. *(To be continued)*