

## **Provincial Desk July 2022** **Provincial Desk**

Below, I would like to share with you a letter written to me by our confrere, Fr Emeka Akabueze, from Nigeria SW. I thought that it would be a loss if I just keep this letter in the archives. I find it both inspirational and informative as Emeka relates his experience with ICOF (Inter Congregational Ongoing Formation) renewal program which many of us know very little about although we, Spiritans, are among the founding members. Fr Paul Flamm is a member ICOF animation team on representing both the Province of Tanzania and the Congregation.



### **MY SABBATICAL RENEWAL PROGRAMME AT ICOF, ARUSHA - TANZANIA, 2022**

*Greetings and best wishes from Nigeria.*

*I write first of all, to thank you Father Superior, for the support given to me during my Sabbatical renewal programme with ICOF.*

*As you said in the Mass on the closing day Ceremony, "the Renewal programme has indeed been a success" and I am happy to have taken the time out, to renew and rejuvenate myself for Spiritan Mission.*

#### ***About ICOF***

*ICOF is an Inter Congregational Ongoing Formation programme designed by three Religious Missionary Institutes and two Societies of Apostolic life. The renewal programme is designed to*

help Priests and Religious who have been working in their various ministries, to rest, refresh, renew, and re-energize themselves for subsequent missions.

The Theme of the programme is taken from **Mark 6:31** where Jesus invites his disciplines "to come with him by themselves to a quiet place and get some rest".

#### MY REASONS FOR TAKING SABBATICAL.

Attracted by the catch phrase, "**Come and rest**" I felt I really needed to find a place to rest and "discharge", after my 25<sup>th</sup> year as a priest, before I further plunge myself "deeper" in the mission of the Congregation and the church at large. Therefore, for me then, Sabbatical/renewal was not an option but a need.

Also, the word "**Change**" was for me The "Good news" (Nzuri in Swahili language). In fact, we don't just change for the sake of change but for what it calls us to: **letting go**.

Yes, letting go of my former assignment, to go on this Renewal Programme. Indeed, leaving my previous mission in OYEDE, Delta State in Nigeria was really difficult. However, it was also a **lesson on Detachment**. I knew I needed Rest, but the physical challenges and attractions of my then present assignment, kept raising doubts in me. Thank God for the Grace to accept "Change".

#### STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITIES OF ICOF PROGRAMME

**Community living:** I can say that the strength of ICOF was the experience of Community living. The Experience was practical and it rekindled in me, the importance of community living. Years of living alone in the mission, had taken its toll on me without consciously realising it. ICOF's method of community living and teamwork, practiced in a multi-cultural community & environment, meant for me - growth, greater broadening of my perspective on other cultures and more acceptance of people who may not necessarily see things the way I do. This community living broadened into the areas of Prayer. The Seminary community at Njiro, Arusha was also helpful in nourishing my community living.

**Prayer life:** A subtle aspect of the injunction to "come and rest" is **to Pray**. By His invitation, Jesus wanted his disciplines not to lose sight of their life of prayer. This was captured by ICOF, both in its method of praying the Liturgy of the hours and in its daily Masses. These were prayed with a creativity that was enlivening and at the same time appealing. The freedom of Celebration, encouraged during the period, to embrace our shared cultural experiences and backgrounds, remains a healthy experience for me.

The Physical Environment of the Canossa community added colour to this wonderful time of prayer and meditation.

**Language of ICOF:** We were introduced to the Language of **Non Violent Communication**, A "language of life". With this language in mind, titles were dropped and everyone sought mutual respect for the other.



*Co-journeying and Group Processing:* These two were for me “two sisters”, with one complimenting the other.

*Co-journeying* is similar to counselling, accompaniment or spiritual direction, and it was offered once a week. At ICDF, the ascent is on co-journeying and not counselling. Perhaps it is a deliberate attempt to avoid mentioning the word “counselling” which most people naturally associate with “one having problems or seeking help”.

This one-on-one accompaniment or Co-journeying, addresses the individual’s well-being and life experiences. In another direction, Co-journeying has helped me to rekindle my need for Spiritual Direction.

*The Group Processing :* The story of the child who was complaining that she had no shoes until she met another child who had no feet, is a good way to understanding the atmosphere of confidentiality, trust and support inherent during the processes. Knowing that one was in the midst of a **Family**, helped a lot. In addition, knowing that one was not alone “Normalized” issues that would have been ordinarily challenging. The technique of **being listened to and listening to others**, added to my counselling and listening skills. In the group, one felt no pressure of “Must Speak”. And when I shared, I felt listened to.

The one-on-one accompaniment and group therapy processes with the certified facilitators at ICDF were indeed thorough, transforming and part of the deeper search for healing and repairs.

*The Retreats :* “Unless you tame your Devil, you can never know your Angel”. In the Golden words of Richard Rohr in his Epic Book, **FALLING UPWARD**.

The Ignatian Retreat and the retreat based on the thorough appraisal of *Laudato si*, were both opportunities to reconnect with God in a more profound way and to His Creation and indeed look at ones devil in the face. The prayerful mood and its accompanying Silence, created an atmosphere of active listening to the voice of God, calling me to newness of life and attentiveness to Nature.

Indeed, the Renewal programme has helped me to deepen my relationship with God: choosing a spiritual path that is most comfortable with my personality. But most particularly, I have been introduced once again to Silent Prayers and Meditation.

*The Modules,* Generally, during the course of the programme, we had seminars that tended to question ones whole existence and indeed ones entire upbringing. Seminars on Emotional Intelligence, Mission and Scriptures and Enneagram with its composite on midlife Transition are points in the whole programme that brought me to real Introspection and Spiritual renewal. Answering some of these questions raised by the modules, was the nadir of my life.

*In Summation,* while I deeply thank you Fr. Provincial, for the support given to me during these six months in the SMS community, Njiro, I also wish to draw strength from Our Spiritan Rule of Life, (SRL 142-145) under the title , **ONGOING FORMATION**, especially article 145, which encourages “Superiors to facilitate for each member, about once every ten years, a lengthy period of renewal to permit a real updating and a spiritual replenishment ”.

*Sabbatical Year* though related to agriculture in the Bible, Leviticus 25, should as well apply to Religious, who also work in the Vineyard of the Lord.

The Idea of ICOF, if I am not mistaken, was the Brainchild of the Spiritans. Presently, the other four institutions, who make up ICOF, have participants yearly and in good number too (e.g. the SMA, had four priests this year as participants). The Spiritans can also increase their participation, as they consider the programme important and necessary.

### **Recommendation**

I would like to recommend the ICOF Renewal programme to confreres who have been more than Ten (10) years in active ministry. Also, to the following:

1. Confreres who are going from one mission to another.
2. Elderly Confreres tired from hard work.
3. CONFRERES who though still young, might be labouring under some personal difficulties and shear stress.
4. Confreres who might just have finished celebrating their Jubilee.

Wishing you all strength and courage in your leadership ministry.

Fraternally yours,

**Fr Emeka Akabueze, CSSp.**  
**Ihiala, Anambra State, Nigeria**

## **MY PASTORAL EXPERIENCE JOURNEY**

Having made my first profession on 15th June 2019, Fr. Daniel Kilala CSSp, the former Councillor for Formation, informed me that I have been appointed to go to France for the Period of Missionary Experience (PME). The news of my appointment surprised me and filled me with anxiety. The idea of going to a place where I never knew the language nor the culture disturbed me to a great extent. It also meant that I had to leave my home country for mission. Little did I know that as John A. Shedd would say, “a ship in harbour is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.”

On 26 September I travelled with confrere scholastic Emmanuel Madinda, who was on holidays but studying theology in France. After a long trip from Kilimanjaro we safely landed in France. I was well welcomed by the confrères who took me to the motherhouse, at Rue Lhomond. In the community, there was a Congolese priest, Auguste Phuati Phuati, one of the formators and Emmanuel Saitoti from Tanzania, who was then in his third year of theology. He was ordained this year. Being new and having no word of French meeting these Tanzanian confreres, we naturally spoke Kiswahili, something that was of a relief for me and lessened my worries. The weather was moderate and pleasant.



After a week, I was sent to the house of retirement at Chevilly-Larue for a year of language and culture learning. My first experience was like that of a newly born baby, who only experiences things by touching and looking. Nevertheless, with patience, as well as wisdom and experience of the senior confreres in the community, I started with a smile, then a word, two words, a sentence and without knowing a new story was written. A story that had neither a villain nor a hero, just me trying to find my path, and confreres were always there to lead me into finding the right path. Not only did I learn the language and the culture, but also, I had an opportunity to practice things like apiculture and fruit farming. Living with elderly and retired confreres, seeing their joy in all they have accomplished in mission, the courage they had and still have, together with their pains and sorrows that formed me both in Spiritual aspect and in personality.

A year after, I was sent to the northern region of France, in the house of formation and in a parish at Lille. The plan was to keep on learning French, as well as doing pastoral activities in the parish of St Maurice, Lille, which is under our Congregation. I was with two other student confreres from Congo Brazzaville and Central Africa Republic. Together, we learned not only

French language and culture but also from each other. My experience at Lille was both unique and enriching. As they say in France ‘In the north, it is cold but the people have warm hearts.’ I hear that it is in the north where until now, when someone gets off the bus thanks the driver. Given that I had started to master the language, it is here that I began to get in contact with the laity (Christians) and other people outside those of the province. The people are kind, passionate and eager to share what they know and have, as well as listening to others. Their warm hearts made me and the other two students, if I can speak for them, feel at home away from home. The invitations from various prayer groups and communities to visit their families, as well as museums, cathedrals and other cultural sites made us part of them, hence sharing part of their story and their lives.

Though I left my home country initially full of fears and doubts, I am so proud to have completed my two years of PME. I have learned many things, and I have become mature in all aspects. I also believe that I have grown in experience and acquired more wisdom. If I could say a word to my old-self, would be this, ‘do not be afraid and do not overthink! Live one day at a time.’ There is a French proverb, which says, *Petit à petit, l’oiseau fait son nid*, which means “little by little, a bird makes its nest”. This implies that, by advancing in small steps each day with patience and perseverance we reach our goals.

Learning a new language and culture made me understand deeply the meaning of being humble. Linguistics will agree with me that *humility* and *humiliation* come from the same root *humilis*, a Latin word which means low/lowly, and *humus*, which means the ground/earth. Although humility should not be confused with submission, there is no doubt that sometimes we become humble by being

humiliated. Just like a Kiswahili adage, which says, ‘*mtaka cha uvunguni, sharti ainame.*’ Meaning, “he who wants what is under the bed, must stoop for it”. I now understand that it is very important to be humble to accept what and who we are and to be humble enough to be human beings.

I found myself in a country very rich in culture. They do the same things as we do, but in different ways. This can be positive and frustrating too. Do I absorb everything and forget what I knew and was taught, or should I maintain that my culture is sufficient, and refuse to learn something new? After all, no culture is superior to the other. Where do I draw the line? Although in principle, we might all know the answer, but in practice I think as a missionary in making, the answers to these questions can be enlightened not only by what we study in classroom, but also by living and discerning the signs of the times. Should I apply my knowledge here and now, or should I hold on to it and wait for the right time and place?

Having completed my PME, I am about to enter the second year of theology at the *Facultés Jésuites de Paris - Centre Sèvres*. This institute is known for its peculiar methodology that demands students to guide themselves and to focus on the areas of one’s interest. This in turn creates competent learners and independent thinkers. This year, as we came to the end of our academic year, there were six theology Spiritan students in our class from five different countries each with his own culture. This mixture tells a lot about the meaning of Spiritan life.

In all aspects, I am still a novice, discovering and learning: from day to day experience, from my teachers and formators and those whom I interact with, both young and old. If I were to say something to all my brothers who are in formation and their journey of faith, I would borrow the words of our Co-founder, François Libermann:

A practical union ... is an instinct of the heart for a person who, having made the sacrifice of self has become free ever after to devote himself completely to others and to bring them along to God. Thus, we endeavour to live every experience in the spirit of God - our joy, our hardships and our pain, the works we undertake in our zeal, and even our failure. **(ND XIII 708).**

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the provincial superior and his team for allowing me to share my little experience with confreres. Lastly, I would like to greet each one of you and express my sincere gratitude in a special way to all formators wherever they are. Your support to us students: moral, financial, spiritual and most of all your presence is of great help. May Almighty God bless you all.

**Sch. Prince Reginald Kimaro, CSSp.**

### APPOINTMENTS

**Fr Joseph Shio:** New Manager of Libermann Schools with effect from 15 August 2022

**Brother Wallace Naamware:** Vocation Training Centre (VTC), Tengeru, with effect from 1 August, 2022

**Fr Apolinaris Msaky:** Child Protection and Safeguarding reference person for the Province with effect from 1 August, 2022

### VACATION

-  Fr Clement Temba
-  Fr Philip Massawe
-  Fr Ezekiel Mrema

*Welcome back home and enjoy your stay with family, relatives and friends.*

### NECROLOGY

18 August 2012: Fr Francis Mketa

*Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.*

### UPCOMING EVENT/S

 **Save the dates**

You are welcome to the celebration of:

1. **Final vows:** Emmanuel Madinda and Joseph Mahimbali
2. **Silver Jubilee of religious Profession:** Patrick Kagwa and Marcel Kessy

**Mass at 10 AM at Saint John Paul II chapel, Provincialate**

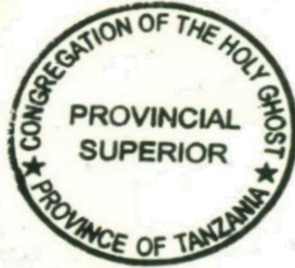
### BIRTHDAYS

August		
Philip	MASSAWE	01
Respicius	KWEYAMBA	01
Nicodemus	MASSONG	03
Fulgence	MOSHI	04
Zakayo	KIMARO	15

Evarist	SHIRIMA	18
Anno	MASSAWE	18
Arnold	BAIJUKYA	22
January	MKUDE	22
Paul	CHUWA	28

Fraternally,

Florentine Mallya, CSSp.  
Provincial Superior



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**<http://www.spiritanstanzania.org>**