



Father Paul Na'anma Longtoe, SMA, celebrates his First Mass



Fr Paul Longtoe was ordained on 6 July 2022, one of 24 SMA priests from nine African countries and India ordained this year. Fr Paul celebrated his First Mass at St Charles Lwanga Parish, Total, Shendam, Plateau State, Nigeria, with his family, parishioners and many priests and Sisters in attendance. Fr Paul has since been appointed to mission in Togo.

"The First thanksgiving Mass of a newly-ordained priest calls for Celebration" were the opening words of Fr Peter Dajan, homilist at the Mass.

He said that Fr Paul "is now a priest of Jesus Christ, and his hands are not just ordinary hands; they are sacred hands used to bless, forgive, anoint, and serve the people. Jesus gives the priest the power to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and he should not play with the privilege given to him."

Fr. Peter acknowledged in a very powerful way our mission as priests. He continued his homily, speaking of the beauty and challenges of the priestly vocation.

Fr Peter spoke of Shendam's connection with the SMA, paying tribute to the work of the founding missionaries, SMA Fathers Oswald Waller (French), Ernest Belin (French) and Joseph Mouren (Dutch).

Much to the delight of the congregation Fr Peter moved effortlessly from English to Hausa and advised the people to pray seriously for their priests.

Fr Peter said that this was a day of celebration: for his own family, for the SMA, for the Diocese of Shendam and for St Charles Lwanga Parish. But most of all it was a celebration of Faith, the Faith preached by Fathers Waller, Oswald and Belin as well as many Irish SMA priests who succeeded them.

A notable Irish SMA was the late Fr Bennie Sands, from Co Down, who worked in this area and whose Cause for Canonisation was initiated by the late (first) Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev Gabriel Ganaka. Fr Sands was 33 when he died in Kwa, 20 miles from Shendam, in 1939.

At the end of the reception Fr Paul thanked all those who have journeyed with him to this present stage. He thanked the SMA priests and support group, in a special way he thanked the Parish priest, Assistant and parishioners of St Charles Lwanga for their support. He thanked his family and all those who have come to support him and prayed God's blessings on them all.

May our new priests do great things for God.

Taken from an article by Fr Paul Miapkwap

Arrival of the first missionaries in Shendam

They had been sent from France with the vague instruction to "found a mission somewhere between the right bank of the Benue and the left bank of the Niger". Monsignor Carlo Zappa SMA (an Italian who was the Prefect Apostolic of the Upper Niger, similar to the role of a bishop) met them in Asaba and he sent them to meet the British colonial administrator, Captain Ruxton, who had told Zappa that he would welcome missionaries. After some days they transferred to canoes as the river level was so low. Ruxton suggested they go to Shendam. They returned to their canoes to continue their journey and after six days of struggle through elephant grass, rough bush, swamps and having crossed the Shemanker River six times, they had their first look at Shendam, built on a slope on the other side of the river. It was a small walled town of one street to which they were welcomed by the Long Goemai and his people – poor people who gave a great welcome to the strangers, including some of their huts until the missionaries could have their own accommodation. And so, on 12 February 1907, the first Catholic Mission north of the Benue and Niger rivers was established in Shendam. From that first mission station has developed the vibrant Catholic presence in northern Nigeria.

Fr Belin died 6 months after arriving in Shendam, aged 26 years.

In his homily, Fr Paul also mentioned Monsignor William Lumley (from Co Meath) as a significant presence in the development of the church in this part of Nigeria. Lumley was appointed Prefect Apostolic of Jos in 1934. There, over the next 18 years, in an area where Islam and traditional religions flourished, he was to lay the foundations for the thriving Church which now exists in that area. From that initial mission in Shendam there are now 14 dioceses in northern Nigeria. They form part of a Nigerian Church which is self-sustaining, staffed mainly by Nigerian diocesan clergy and religious Sisters.

To God be the glory!

ELIN, ERNEST	1901	GRANT, JOHN	1983
SCHUMACHER, EMILIS	1909	HOLLAND, JAMES	1964
SCHLACHER, DONAT	1919	O'CONNELL, PATRICK	1964
O'CONNOR, FLORENCE	1933	SHEEHY, JOHN	1988
JOHNSON, ADOLPHE	1936	O'HARA, JOHN	1966
HARRIS, JOHN	1937	CONNOLLY, JOHN	1969
O'DWYER, ANTHONY	1937	SCHAE, ALPHONSE	1969
O'ROURKE, FRANCIS	1938	O'SHEA, JOHN	1971
WALLER, OSWALD	1939	GILROY, PETER	1972
BERAGHTY, ANDREW	1940	KENNY, HENRY	1972
MONPOINT, CELESTIN	1941	MCEVOY, JAMES	1972
BERNARDI, BERNGARDO	1942	DREW, MICHAEL	1973
SCHLECHT, EDMOND	1942	SITTLER, ALPHONSE	1973
LEE, PATRICK	1944	WHITE, ERIC	1973
BANDS, FRANCIS, B	1949	BYRNE, WILLIAM	1974
HOLLAND, WILLIAM	1952	HARRISON, MICHAEL	1974
ROHLINGER, THEOPHILE	1956	MORRIS, MALACHY	1974
O'FLYNN, MICHAEL	1953	HESSION, JAMES	1975
FISCHER, GEORGE	1955	MCCARTHY, JOHN	1975
HUGHES, THOMAS	1957	MOUREN, JOSEPH	1975
SCULLY, MICHAEL	1959	GANNON, WILLIAM	1977
STITT, ROBERT	1960	KERR, PATRICK	1977
WATSON, DANIEL	1961	MURPHY, JOHN M.	1977
LAVAN, PATRICK	1962	TOBIN, RICHARD	1977
SHREVEY, WILLIAM	1962	BRILLINGER, EUGENE	1978

Memorial Stone remembering SMAs who served in Northern Nigeria.

62 years of missionary service



Sr Mary Rita O'Mahony has returned to Ireland after 62 years of missionary service in Ghana.

During her time in Ghana, Sr Mary Rita (a native of Cork City), was a teacher, and later Principal, of the OLA College of Education in Cape Coast, Ghana. Among her other appointments was as Headmistress of the Secondary School in Kenyasi, Brong-Ahafo. Her final appointment in Ghana was as part of the teaching staff of the OLA Sisters Formation House in Cape Coast.

Our photo shows Sr Mary Rita with Most Rev Dr Gabriel Palmer-Buckle, retired Archbishop of Cape Coast.

Before her departure she had a 'farewell' supper with Jesuit Father Don Hinfey who is part of the Jesuit Retreat team at Claver House Jesuit Retreat Centre in Cape Coast.

The OLA Sisters have been present in Ghana since 1883, nearly 140 years. The Ghana Province has 76 Sisters serving in 10 African countries as well as Ireland, France and Italy.



Sr Mary Rita, Fr Hinfey and Sr Rose Sumah share supper



Sr Anne (from Dublin) checks some of the knitwear at the OLA Vocational Training Centre, Bugisi, Tanzania, which trains women in different skills so that they can provide a basic income for their families.

Mwamapalala celebrates its new Health Centre

The OLA Sisters arrived in Mwamapalala, Tanzania in 1991, where the late Fr Dick Kelleher SMA (Midleton, Co Cork) was Parish Priest. Two OLAs taught in the local Secondary school, one was involved in the local Dispensary and the fourth was involved in the empowerment of the local youth and women. In 1994, a second community was opened in Bugisi – two Sisters from Ghana and one from Ireland. Again, in line with their aims, two of the Sisters devoted their time to youth development and the third was involved in the local dispensary. From these small beginnings, Sr Anne McCormack and the OLA Sisters developed the Bugisi Vocational Training Centre.

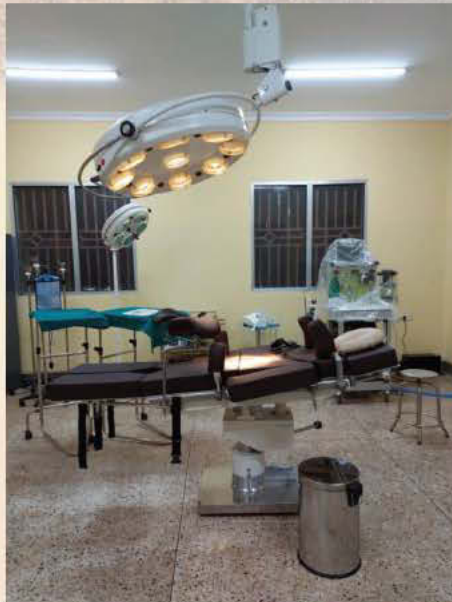
There are now four OLA communities in Tanzania.

An English Medium Primary School was established in Bugisi 2015 with Sr Rita Dung (Nigeria) as Headmistress. Last January, Sr Rita and Sr Blessing Umeloh (Nigeria) began teaching in St Clare's school, Mlali, in the Archdiocese of Dodoma. Sr Comfort Amevor (Ghana) and Sr Mary Mark (Tanzania) continue to teach in the Bugisi Primary School.

Sisters Regina Opoku (Ghana), Maura Cranney (Newry, Co. Down) and Perpetua Acquah (Ghana) established the Mwanza community in 2004. Sr Regina taught in the University; Sr Perpetua in the Local Diocesan Secondary School and Sr Maura worked in a school for Handicapped Children. On the shore of Lake Victoria, it now serves as a Formation and administrative centre for the OLA as well as a residence for Sisters involved in different ministries in the area. Some Sisters are also involved in parish work. Sr Celestina Ikepeni (Nigeria) is in charge of the formation of young Tanzanian and Kenyan Sisters; Sr Cassie Hurley is a Counsellor in St Augustine's University and in the Mwanza area.

By the grace of God, the future looks bright for the Tanzanian branch of the OLA, with five professed Sisters and four Novices. They are joined by 12 OLAs from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Tanzania and Togo.

The Dispensaries in both Bugisi and Mwamapalala have been upgraded to Health Centres. Presently Sr Kathleen Costigan (Templemore, Co. Tipperary) is the Director in Bugisi and Sr Lucy Dumenu (Ghana) is in charge of personnel. Sr Monica Mafiana (Nigeria) is the Director in Mwamapalala. Sr Regina Opoku is a Consultant for an NGO working on developing Government Policy. Sisters Regina and Lucy were among that founding group in the early 1990's.



There is a saying "keep your face always towards the sunshine and shadows will fall behind you." It has been a long time and not without challenging and discouraging moments. Thanks be to God the hour has finally come. Our dream has come true and our mouths are filled with joy. What then shall we say unto the Lord who has made the impossible possible?

The OLA Sisters, the staff, the Mwamapalala parish and in fact the whole village couldn't hide their joy for what God has done. The day had come for the official Opening and Blessing of our new Health Centre. And so, on 9 May 2022, Fr Placido Masasi, representing Bishop Liberatus Sangu of Shinyanga diocese, celebrated Mass and blessed the Centre. He was assisted by Fathers Emmanuel (PP Mwamapalala), Pasray Mawra, Martin Massanja and Mariel Somalo SMA (Philippines), who came from the neighbouring Bugisi parish.

Fr Placido gave thanks to God and congratulated the OLA Sisters for their immense contribution towards health care delivery in this part of Tanzania. He urged the staff to continue to render a holistic health care to all clients, regardless of their background and to do it as Jesus himself would have done. He encouraged them to use this opportunity that God has granted, to bring health to all.

After the Mass there was prayer, blessing and unveiling of the Health centre and its new theatre to which our Sisters and OLA supporters in Ireland have contributed massively. May God bless them for their generosity.



SMA FAMILY VOCATIONS COMMUNITY – 2022



Fr. Florent Londji, SMA
Benin



Fr. Armel Tcheoubi, SMA
Benin



Fr. Adoko Mahunan, SMA
Benin



Fr. Chrysostome Grinsky, SMA
C.A.R.



Fr. Doumalo Gbate, SMA
C.A.R.



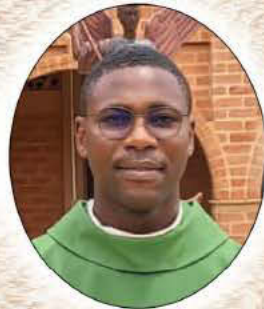
Fr. C.



Fr. Guillaume M. Koffi, SMA
Togo



Fr. Mathias Kuodjo Etse, SMA
Togo



Fr. Achille A. Allaglo, SMA
Togo



Fr. Alain Aka, SMA
Cote d'Ivoire



Fr. Antoine Koné, SMA
Cote d'Ivoire



Fr.



Fr. Paul Longtoe, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. John Otun, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Henry Chinwumba, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Emmanuel Ojo, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Nestor Betweko, SMA
D.R.C.



Fr.

WE THANK GOD FOR THESE NEW SMA MISSIONARY PRIESTS

SMA Family Vocations Community (FVC)

Since the foundation of the Irish Province in 1912, lay people have been part of our missionary work. They have supported and encouraged the mission to Africa through prayer and financial support, particularly as members of the Family Vocations Community (FVC), promoting our Mission Association Cards (MAC) and donating to our Mission boxes.

The FVC family is now the spiritual and financial backbone of the SMA training programmes in many African countries, India, Philippines and Poland. FVC members (each one is called a Sponsor) commit themselves to pray for and help fund the

training of our seminarians throughout the world. Its 10,000 plus members come from every county in Ireland. With more than 300 seminarians the cost for training them as well as providing for the food etc. is not small. More than €2 million is needed every year to ensure we can welcome young men – most from less affluent families than we here in Ireland – and help them respond to God's call to go into the harvest, "for the harvest is great and the labourers are few."

What does an SMA Sponsor do? Most Sponsors are part of a group with a Head Sponsor as leader. The Head Sponsor agrees to

ORDINATION CLASS



Fr. Sylvain Bamondjia, SMA
C.A.R.



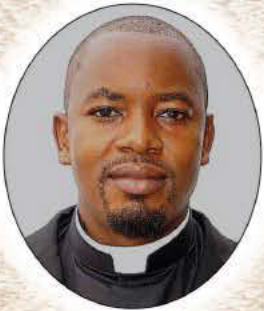
Fr. Innocent Regopeh, SMA
C.A.R.



Fr. Sylvanus Moussa, SMA
C.A.R.



Fr. Vincent Domfeh, SMA
Ghana



Fr. Denis Telewa, SMA
Kenya



Rev. Thappeta Rajarathnam, SMA
India



Fr. Anicet Nzinga, SMA
D.R.C.



Fr. Delphano Mushibwe, SMA
Zambia



Fr. Geoffrey Chanda, SMA
Zambia

PRAYERS AND WISH THEM WELL

collect the annual donation from her/his group and forward to the local SMA FVC Director. Other Sponsors set up a Direct Debit with their bank for a set amount. It takes from eight to eleven years to train an SMA priest. We ask our Sponsors to join for an eight-year period (and some have re-joined several times). The amount people give each year is usually between €15 and €20 or similar in Sterling. If, at any stage, someone is unable to make their contribution that's ok, there's no coercion on anyone. People's circumstances change. It is a voluntary donation to the SMA for our formation work.

As you see, through the support of the FVC, we ordained 24 priests this year. Praise and thanks to almighty God who called

In summary, Sponsors try to do three things:

- to pray for vocations;
- to encourage vocations in their home through a positive attitude to their Christian faith;
- to make a financial contribution annually to the training costs of SMA priests.

Can you help us provide more priests for Africa?

For more information on the FVC, on how to start a group or to become an individual sponsor please contact one of the following:

Fr Christopher Emokhare SMA or Patricia Nagle
FVC Office, African Missions, Blackrock Road, Cork
Tel: 021 461 6316 or fvcdirector.munster@sma.ie
or fvc.munster@sma.ie

Fr Frank McGrath
SMA Zimmermann House, Cloonbigeen,
Claregalway, Co Galway
Tel: 091 798 880 or sma.claregalway@sma.ie

Fr Dan McCauley or Patricia Murtagh
African Missions, Dromantine, Newry, Co Down BT34 1RH
Tel: (+44) 028 3082 1224 or fvc.dromantine@sma.ie

Fr Paul Monahan
SMA House, 81 Ranelagh Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6
Tel: 01- 496 8162 or sma.dublin@sma.ie

Interested in becoming an SMA priest?

Contact Fr Anthony Kelly SMA at vocations@sma.ie
or 021 4292871 or African Missions, Blackrock Road,
Cork, T12 TD54

these young men, to their families who nurtured their vocation and to our FVC members who prayed and paid for their seminary education.

On our part we commit to remembering you and yours in our prayers every day, especially at Mass.

At the end of the eight-year period we invite you to your local SMA House for a Thanksgiving Mass and to meet some of our younger priests (from Africa, Asia or Poland). FVC members often attend other events at SMA houses by virtue of their connection with the Society.

My experience as an FVC Head Sponsor

Ann McKeever from Navan, Co Meath, has been a Head Sponsor for 48 years. Here Ann shares some of memories of the FVC over that time.

My first contact with the SMA / FVC was through Olive Meaghan, a cousin of my late husband, from Ardee, Co Louth, in the early 1970's. Olive had two FVC groups and she asked me to an FVC Mass and meeting she was hosting.

In 1974 I decided to start a group here in Navan. Things started slowly, however very shortly we had about 60 members. After we got organised, I asked the group if they would be interested in having an Annual Mass here in my home. They all thought it would be a very good idea. Each year we planned and looked forward to it. I have many great memories of our FVC House Masses down the years. My children, grandchildren and in recent years some of my great grandchildren served and participated in our Annual Mass.

These Masses and FVC meetings were very special, spiritual and nourishing for us all. They were also a great opportunity for the members of the group to meet up with each other over a cup of tea and a chat after the Mass, which was so nice and so important because many members of the group do not get a chance to meet up very often. It was also a great opportunity for us all to get to know the many wonderful SMA priests who have been with us down the years. For the members of the group to meet and talk with the priest was very important indeed. Our group has had an FVC House Mass here most years until Covid-19 crisis interrupted this, but please God as the situation continues to improve, we will be able to continue with our yearly house Mass.

As mentioned above we have had many SMA priests with us on our journey – from Fr Martin Costello in the early years to the present Director for Leinster, Fr Paul Monahan. All the Directors have shared so much with us over the years. They have

encouraged us and helped us in so many ways. They have all served as missionaries in different parts of Africa and have spoken to us about their experiences of life in Africa as missionary priests, the many joys and also the difficulties of life for them and the people in the various places they have served. They have helped us to understand the great need for the FVC mission, they have spoken to us about the great achievements of the FVC on the ground in Africa and the great support the groups give to the training and education of so many SMA priests.

Another great memory for our group is our annual SMA Pilgrimage to Knock. My memories of these occasions are the group enjoying a great day together, a day of prayer and good times. Our group organised a bus to Knock each year. These trips to Knock were filled with joy for the group.

Over the years I got to know many of the SMA Fathers who were living in the SMA House on Wellington Road, Dublin and now in Ranelagh. Each year at some time during the Christmas season they would be invited out here for a Christmas dinner. These were always very special occasions and I think enjoyed by all.

A number of years ago our group along with other FVC groups organised our Annual Sponsors Day Mass in Simonstown GAA Club here in Navan. In recent years, this Mass has been celebrated by one of our African SMA priests. These Masses again were very special occasions for all the Sponsors who could attend. Sadly, the Covid-19 crisis has also disrupted these Masses, but please God we will be able to start again soon.

My journey with the FVC has been a wonderful experience, as I think it has for the whole group. Please God things will continue to improve, and we can continue our FVC Mission in answer to the call of Christ.

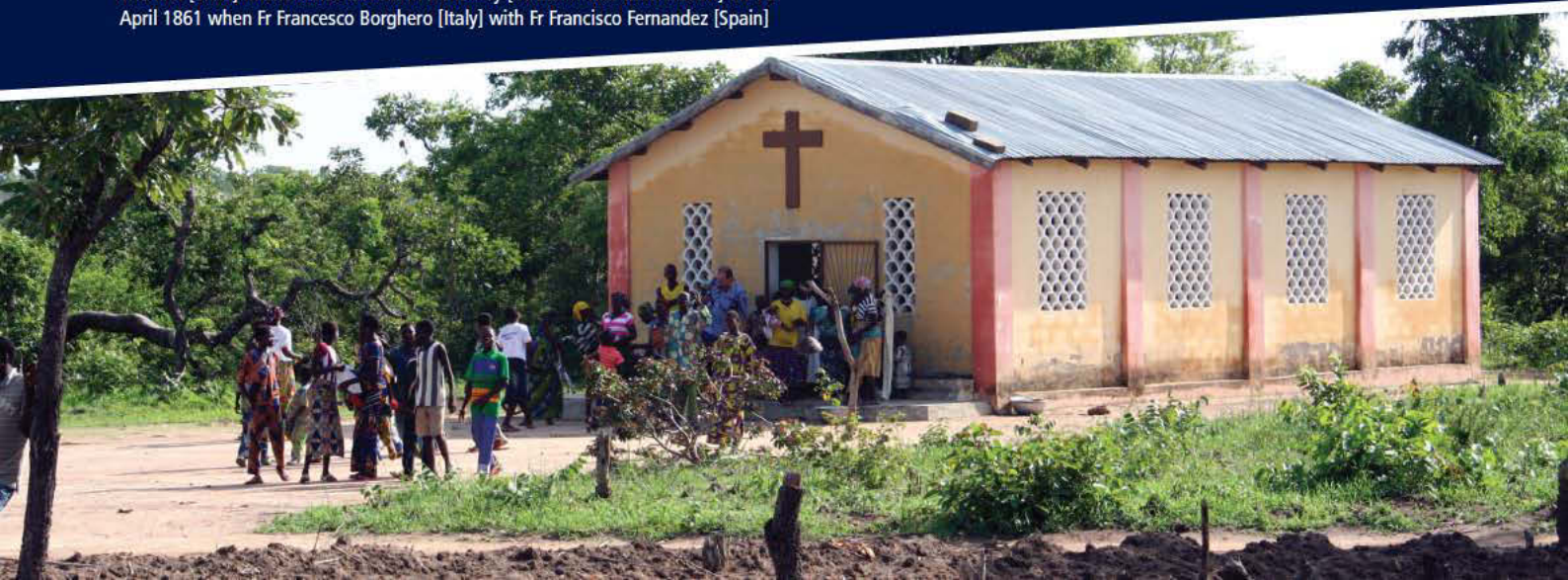
Thanks, Ann, for sharing your experience of the FVC with us. Thanks too and every blessing on you and all those in your group down the years (living and deceased, particularly the late Mrs Olive Meaghan). May the Lord watch over you and your families.

Fr Paul Monahan SMA

Parishioners and Fr Marcos Delgado SMA [Spain] leaving Bourgou parish church in Djougou diocese, Benin Republic, West Africa, after Sunday Mass. An estimated 48% of Beninois are Christians [Catholics – 25%; Protestants 13%], 28% Muslim, 23% African Traditional Religions.

The first [SMA] missionaries arrived in Dahomey [as Benin was then known] on 18 April 1861 when Fr Francesco Borghero [Italy] with Fr Francisco Fernandez [Spain]

landed at Ouidah. A third SMA – Fr Louis Edde [France] died during the journey. One of their first acts was to establish a school. Today, there are more than 523 Catholic educational institutions in the country, including 5 Catholic universities. Djougou diocese covers an area of 11,126 sq kms with 71,213 Catholics served by 40 diocesan priests in 23 parishes [2019 statistics].





SMA FORMATION HOUSE, SOWUTUOM, ACCRA, GHANA

When, in 1983, the SMA General Assembly decided to implement a near 30-year-old decision to recruit African candidates into the Society of African Missions, various Formation Houses were established in Africa to facilitate their training. Houses were also established in India, Philippines and Poland. The decision taken back in the 1950's to welcome African candidates was not implemented at that time as the Society saw it as more important – and in keeping with the ideals of our Founder, Bishop de Brésillac – to establish a church with indigenous, local priests. It was only in the 1970's and 80's that we saw the possibility to go ahead with this decision. Also, several African bishops in our traditional mission territories along the West coast were asking why were we not 'open' to candidates from their local churches. From the late 60's and early 70's the Vatican had begun appointing indigenous priests as bishops all over the continent. So, it was time for the SMA to also 'read the signs of the times'. The Formation House was opened in 1988 in Sowutuom, a suburb of Accra. The Formation House Rector is Nigerian SMA, Fr Jonathan Malong who was ordained in 2012. Before his appointment to Sowutuom, Fr Jonathan was on mission in Ghana and Kenya. He now takes up the story:

"Over the years, the Seminary Formation house has been staffed by SMAs from at least seven different countries, including Fr Colum Nilan (Kinvara, Co Galway). Our seminarians are doing their first cycle of formation (Philosophy) and they come from the surrounding countries of West Africa. This academic year we are blessed with 19 students coming from Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin Republic and Burkina Faso. As Rector, I'm assisted by Fr German Navarra Patiga, SMA, from the Philippines. We have four

local personnel who complement our efforts in the kitchen and maintenance of the house etc.

Most our activities revolve around the four cardinal areas of integral formation (spiritual, intellectual, human and pastoral) as enshrined in the SMA Charter of Formation. These activities include Spiritual and liturgical activities in the chapel, lectures in the diocesan major seminary (where I also teach), sports activities, manual work, pastoral visitations to hospitals, parishes and a Home for the Elderly. We live in community, praying, eating and recreating together. We also have a large garden where we grow most of our vegetables as well as yam, cassava and some fruits such as pineapple, oranges and banana. Recently, we have introduced fish farming and though it is still in the development phase, the lack of a constant water supply is slowing down the expansion of this initiative.

During holiday periods (especially long vacation), our seminarians return to their various countries where they spend half of the holiday time with their families. Each one is assigned to an SMA mission for the rest of their vacation as part of a mini-Stage (pastoral cum mission experiences or practical skills acquisition). We are infinitely grateful to the SMA older provinces, especially Ireland, which has been a great supporter of this particular house and other formation houses in Africa.

"Be ever assured of our continuous prayers."

Thanks to Fr. Jonathan Kangpan Malong, SMA, for his help in compiling this article.





Pumpkins galore for Hallow'een

Our photo shows some of the 19 participants from 17 to 70 years of age with their Trainer – Mr Larry Lynch – and some of the OLA Sisters and SHEP members displaying their crop of pumpkins, grown in a poly tunnel in the OLA Ardfoyle Convent grounds, Cork City. This one-year Horticultural Course in a Level 4 Local Training Initiative supported by the Cork Educational Training Board. The Sisters are also hosting an International Garden where local people and some migrants are growing plants etc. from seeds they have brought from their home countries.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones...

Please pray for our OLA and SMA missionaries, and our deceased supporters.

Fr Owen MCKENNA (Cork City), served in Nigeria and Ireland, died on 2 May 2022, aged 86 years.

Fr John FLYNN (Newtowncashel, Co Longford) served in Nigeria, Ghana, Italy and Philippines, died on 22 June 2022, aged 91 years.

Fr Maurice KELLEHER ((Dunmanway, Co Cork) served in Nigeria and Ireland, died on 10 August 2022, aged 84 years.

Fr Michael NOHILLY (Corofin, Co Galway), served in Ghana, South Africa and Ireland, died on 27 September 2022, aged 76 years.

Lord God, welcome our deceased supporters, benefactors and missionaries into the peace of your Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INTERESTED IN A LIFE AS AN SMA MISSIONARY?...IN AFRICA?



For further information, contact
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