

# RELAF NEWSLETTER N° 30

## Brothers of the Christian Schools



Lasallian Region of Africa



March 2019



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Chief editor: *Br. Pierre OUATTARA*

Assistant editors: *Br. Ferdinand BIZIYAREMYE & Br. Joan SALA COLL*

Infography and Translation: *Br. Pierre Aymard BAKO*

To send articles: [relaf@lasalle.org](mailto:relaf@lasalle.org)

WebSite : [www.relaf.info](http://www.relaf.info)

# Editorial

**D**ear Brothers, dear Lasallian friends.

As an editorial for this 30th edition of our NewsLetter, I would like to draw our attention on three countries in particular: South Sudan, Eritrea and Mozambique. Why these three countries? Simply to illustrate how much the mission of education remains a necessity if not an emergency in this year when, throughout the Institute, we are celebrating the tercentenary of the birth in heaven of our Founder, Saint John Baptist De La Salle.

We must be vigilant and not rest on our laurels because meeting the educational needs of the poorest children and keeping our schools accessible to them remain permanent challenges to our fidelity. The Rule in its article 14 tells us that "In order to remain faithful to the charism of the Institute, the Brothers analyze new educational and pastoral needs. They respond to them in a creative manner, either in their existing educational establishments or by founding other educational institutions for the service of the poor.<sup>1</sup> Article 28 adds, "By the vow of association for the educational service of the poor, the Brothers promise to "conduct" as a community, educational works **accessible** to poor. Article 3 reminds us that "the Christian schools, which need to be **constantly renewed**, are the preferred sphere of activity for the Brothers. The Institute is open also to other forms of teaching and education, suited to the needs of time and place."<sup>2</sup>

Two years ago, we started the La Salle secondary school in Rumbek, South Sudan. The youngest nation in the world is also the most unfortunate ...<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. 14. 2

<sup>2</sup> The terms in bold are my own. Any Lasallian associate will undoubtedly share what is said of the Lasallian school in the Rule of the Brothers of the Christian Schools ...

<sup>3</sup> Damien Glez, quoting an annual "World happiness report" in the *Jeune Afrique* of March 22, 2019.

Until now, our Brothers Eustace, Joseph and Julius, like their 76 students, use two classrooms from the School of the Loretto Sisters. We are eager to see the Brothers fit out with their students on their own site. Hopefully this will be done in the months of next May - June. The construction of the community and classrooms has already started. We need now to think of buying a school bus. The school is 7 or 8 kilometres outside the city.

At last, I was able to visit our Brothers in Eritrea. Their different works are well maintained. Saint Joseph of Keren, a school of 1760 students, has a new look. The Agro-Pastoral Training and Production Centre in Hagaz has 300 students. But the work that impressed me the most is Shinara: a primary school that is quite isolated because of the bad state of the road. It has more than 400 students coming from very far to study. It is in the spirit of a "beyond the border" initiative for poor children who would otherwise not go to school. The novitiate and the scholasticate formation is done within the country because of the impossibility to leave the country. Our Brothers feel very isolated there.

The pastoral visit with the Superior general had given me the opportunity to discover the three works that the Brothers have in Beira. John XXIII School, which had more than 3,000 students, a new primary school with a growing kindergarten and finally a Social Centre located in a popular neighbourhood and welcoming more than 200 young people. The passage of Hurricane Idai, which destroyed the city by 90%, did not spare these institutions.

The Lenten Season is par excellence a time of solidarity, sharing and prayer ... Think of those people who suffer, children and young people lacking education. Let us keep them in our prayers and let us show them our solidarity. Let's make this Lenten season our "honeymoon with God". Happy Lent to all of you.

*Your Brother in De La Salle, Pierre OUATTARA.*



# Abidjan: Mass on the occasion of the Tricentenary

The Brothers of the Christian Schools present here in Ivory Coast, did not stay apart from of the commemoration of the tercentenary of the birth in heaven of their Founder, Saint John Baptist De La Salle.

Indeed, in accordance with the certificate issued by his Eminence, Jean Pierre Cardinal KUTWA, Archbishop of Abidjan, the Good Shepherd Parish of the Archdiocese of Abidjan was designated as a place where Christians can receive partial or full indulgences, on the occasion of the Tercentenary Jubilee. Thus, this Sunday, March 3rd took place the celebration of the mass among other activities related to this event here in Ivory Coast. The Brothers from the Regional House, the Brothers from the Foyer Akwaba, the Brothers from the Scholasticate and from Good Shepherd communities and the collaborators came together to live and celebrate this event with the parishioners of Good Shepherd.

Mass began at 9am with a procession including the Brothers. At the beginning of the Mass presided by the parish priest, Father Jean-Pierre OUEDRAOGO, with three priests concelebrating, Brother BAKO Pierre Ay-mard took the floor to welcome the collaborators, the students of CELAF, the Religious, the guests and the lay faithful to this celebration. He also announced the news that brings together this august assembly: the birth in heaven of Saint John Baptist De La Salle. So he presented the Institute by answering these main questions: who are the Brothers? What do they do? Where are they?

During the liturgy, the Brothers participated in the animation by singing three songs. After the collection, there was a procession of symbols. Two Brothers did the procession with these different symbols composed of the statue of the Founder and a painting on which is written LA SALLE with the star between the two words, sign of faith for the Brothers.



The assembly closely followed the different meanings of these symbols, which express the great wealth of lasallian spirituality and charism, bequeathed by the holy Founder. Before the final blessing, Brother Valère ADONSOU thanked the entire parish community, especially the parish priest for his involvement and determination in organizing this event.

The Parish priest wished the Brothers a happy jubilee and thanked them for the choice of his parish. He invited the faithful to participate in the spiritual exercises of the parish to enjoy many and holy graces. He reiterated his commitment to collaborate on other activities.

At the end of the mass, booklets and images of the Holy Founder were distributed to the parishioners to make known Saint John Baptist De La Salle and the lasallian family working for humane and Christian education of children and young people, especially the most disadvantaged in the world.

May God grant us many holy vocations for a more committed and engaging lasallian educational mission for the benefit of children and young people in search of meaning, and live Jesus in our hearts, forever!

*Brother Elisée P. LARE*

*Saint Miguel Scholasticate*



# Bénin: 700 Lasallians at the Tricentenary celebration

**A**s part of the celebration of the tercentenary jubilee, the Lasallians of the District of Gulf of Benin met from February 25<sup>th</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup> in Akassato (Benin). It is the Catholic School of La Salle in Akassato that served as a welcoming setting for about 700 Lasallians, from Dapaong, Lomé, Togoville, Bohicon and from the host college. The gathering brought together delegations of students, teachers, and young Lasallians from Togo and Benin around cultural activities (traditional and modern dances) and sports (football and basketball) but especially the opening mass.

To give thanks to God, the opening mass was presided over by the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Cotonou, who invited the participants to cultivate values such as the fear of God, humility, and the desire to learn, to be formed, and to enter into the proclamation of the glory of God, in reference to the liturgical texts of the day drawn from the readings of Sirach (39, 5-10) and the Gospel of Matthew (18, 1-5). The celebration also saw the presence of delegations of some religious Orders, civil and administrative authorities of the locality, as well as parents of students who showed their support and joy in celebrating such an event with the lasallian family.

Participating in this ceremony, Brother Paulin DEGBE, the Provincial of the District, in his speech specified the objectives of the gathering that are to make known the life and spirituality of Saint John Baptist de La Salle and to renew the commitment of the Lasallians through the shared vision. He also expressed the hope that this gathering would be an opportunity to rediscover the Founder's contributions to the esteem of the teaching profession, "an unrecognized and less attractive profession."

With the purpose to introduce the Brothers' schools to the students, this gathering was also the place to practice fair play with young people through the sport activities. The winners of this tournament were the men's soccer and men's basketball teams of Akassato, and the girls' soccer team of the school Notre Dame of Lake of Togoville. Other students of the different lasallian schools mentioned above did not fail to share their cultures through demonstrations of traditional dances from some regions of Togo and Benin.

Meanwhile, the lasallian knowledge of the students was tested through the game "budding genius". The students of the host college won the game, which revealed a certain openness of mind of all the students regarding their knowledge about Saint John Baptist de La Salle and his works in general.

It is important to note that the celebration of the tercentenary at the de La Salle Catholic school in Akassato was indeed a successful event thanks to the commitment and dedication of all the Lasallians of the District. After this gathering at Akassato, which was one of the first in the District as part of the jubilee, other opportunities will follow to share the life of the Founder and the mission of the lasallian family.

*Nadège LAMBONI,*

*Communications officer of the District of Gulf of Benin*



# Burkina Faso: La Salle yesterday, today and tomorrow

**A** like other lasallian schools where activities are carried out throughout this Lasallian Jubilee year, La Salle Tounouma School did not want to stay on the sidelines of this event. With the help of the committee in charge of revitalizing the pastoral activities of the school, some activities were identified to mark the lasallian jubilee year in the school. These activities include a conference on the lasallian family with the theme: "De La Salle yesterday, today and tomorrow", a competition of songs, slams, poems, general lasallian knowledge, drawing and cartoons on SJBS. These activities effectively began with the conference which took place on March 12th, 13th, in the school big hall facilitated by Brother Sylvain CONSIMBO, Director of the inter-African Novitiate Our Lady of Grace of Bobo. It was held under the musical presence of Brother Pierre Aymard BAKO, Secretary of RELAF, and musician artist. In order to succeed and have a better control of his audience, the speaker decided to develop the topic to three major groups of students.

He started with the juniors (370 students) on March 12 from 8 am to 10 am. At the very beginning, Brother BAKO was invited to perform one of his songs from his album "The Lasallian". This performance proved to the students the incredible talent of the Brother.



The Brother presenter made the students understand the origins of the lasallian family, presented the lasallian family and its realities today, and invited them to reflect on the preservation and safeguarding of this wealth bequeathed by SJBS for future generations. The same approach was used with the senior students on March 13 from 8 am to 10 am. But these were further divided into two groups because of their number. What made the difference between that day and the day before is the atmosphere with Brother BAKO. For his performances, he was accompanied by the school group of dancers. This lighted up the students' interest in the conference. We say thank you to Brother Sylvain and the Novitiate community for agreeing to share with us their time by animating this theme. To Brother BAKO and his community, our sincere thanks, congratulations and our encouragements for the various services. Thank you to the community of the Brothers of Tounouma for taking these activities at heart not only to mark the lasallian jubilee year, but to edify the youth on the lasallian family.

De La Salle one heart, one commitment, and one life.

Live Jesus in our hearts... forever!

*Brother Judes Traoré*

*District of West Africa*





# Rwanda : Official entry in the Postulancy

**A**s is the custom in the Delegation, at the beginning of the Community year, a time is set by the formation community to officially mark the

entry of the postulants in the postulancy. This event took place on Tuesday, February 19, 2019 at 6:00 pm.

This happened during a community Eucharistic celebration, presided by the parish priest of Rukomo, Father Jean Bosco, concelebrating with his new vicar, Father Matthias of Ugandan nationality who was discovering the community for the first time since his arrival in Rwanda.

During the Eucharist, the readings of the Gospel inspired the celebrant who called for attention on the essential. To the disciples travelling, worried about the lack of bread that they forgot to take with them, Jesus invites us to focus on the essential, to see and understand, to believe and to trust him on the road, and especially to beware of stereotypes that scare or disorient us in formation (leaven of the Pharisees).

The Brother President during the same Eucharist took time to express a word of welcome to the three postulants Pierre, Jean d'Amour and Antoine.

He then called each of them by name to give them a brochure where they can find some guidelines for their formation as well as the essentials of the spirit of the Institute that they must acquire during the formation in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

After the Eucharist the community with the two guests, shared a festive meal in a fraternal atmosphere, after which the members of the community accompanied the two priests.

*Brother Jean Bosco BIGIRIMANA*

*President of the Delegation of Rwanda*



# Lasallian reflection: 'Who will roll away the stone for us'

T

he story of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is repeated in the four Gospels (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-20, Luke 24:1-12, and John 20:1-18.).

Regarding the women's anxiety about the large stone placed at the threshold of the tomb, only the Gospel of St. Mark mentions it: "And they were saying to one another, **'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?'**" (Mark 16:3).

What seems special in the Gospels is that the three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) include **"the women"** who went to the grave (Mt 28:1, Mark 16:1, and Luke 1:1). The Gospel of Saint John, exceptionally, is the only one that speaks of only **"one woman"** who went to the tomb on the first day of the week. It is Mary Magdalene (Jn 20:1). Several other divergent or convergent facts can be found by reading and meditating on these Gospels. But the central message remains the same: **"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures"** (1Co 15:3-4).

**"Who will roll away the stone for us?"**, this was the concern of the women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) on the morning of the Resurrection (Mk 16:1).

Today again, our world is so worried. Many people who, like the women, say: **"Who will roll away the stone for us?"**; in other words, they want to say: **"Who will help us find the solution to the problems that we already face?"**.

Also, many children who lack education are on the quest for knowledge and keep saying: **"Who will roll away the stone for us?"**; in other words, **"Who will save us from the abyss of ignorance?"**. Ignorance symbolizes a blocked horizon, which is synonymous with no future...

Ignorance is the **"common enemy"** of Lasallians because it is an awful evil; it is a big stone blocking a multitude of children, plunging them into a harmful spiritual and intellectual blindness.

During this Easter season, we beg the favour of God to raise men and women of good will, who will roll away our stones of ignorance, our stones of pride and our stones of lack of love, so that we may find the *"Rabboni"* in our daily lives.

May God send also men and women who will tell their brothers and sisters: **"Why are you crying?"** Stay in peace. We will find together in Christ the solution to our problems.

The question: **"Woman, why are you crying?"** was recorded in the Gospel of John only, and this twice (John 20:13, 15). In fact, when we help our fellows, we build with them a good, just and fraternal world. May the Risen Christ help us to make this possible.

Live Jesus in our hearts! Forever!

*Brother Pie Nsukula BAVINGIDI*



# Burkina Faso: Young Lasallian, 'Rise and serve!'

From the 8th to the 9th of March 2019 the young Lasallians of Tounouma secondary school had a training outing at Pierre Kula Secondary School in Diébougou under the heading: Young Lasallian, rise and serve. They were 27 young people to take part in this outing. The trip was done through public transport means on March 8 at 8am for departure and March 9 at 4 pm for the trip back to Bobo. These young people were accompanied by Brother Judes Traoré. For the organization and the success of the outing, the help of people of good will was crucial: the Novitiate, the Provincial House, La Salle Tounouma School, Pierre Kula School for accommodation, food, and hospitality... Brother Denis Traoré, Young Lasallians' Coordinator of the District of West Africa and Brother Pierre Aymard BAKO, RELAF Secretary and Regional Coordinator of Young Lasallians honoured this Young Lasallians outing with their participation. During the outing, the young people first visited the orphanage on March 8 where they expressed their gratitude by bringing to the orphaned children some presents. After this visit, they organized, from 9 pm to 10: 30 pm, a social night with Brother Pierre Aymard Bako, who was the musician artist in the spotlight. In addition to the performances of Brother Bako, dances, plays, songs and humour were the activities of this night. On the morning of March 9th, the young people continued their activities with the animation of the 6 o'clock mass at Diébougou Cathedral. After Mass, at 7:30 am, they had a talk with the Brother Director of Pierre Kula School, Brother Wenceslas Somé. As part of the activities of this outing, there was a conference at 8:30 on the theme Young Lasallian, rise and serve, facilitated by Brother BAKO.

At the end of the conference, the young people were invited to list the obstacles to their commitment in the service of others and to propose concrete actions to undertake after the outing. After the conference, they had a tour at 10 am in a cave that served as a military base. They participated from 2 to 4 pm in the fair organized by the School girls on the occasion of the women's Day. They ended the activities planned during this trip with the fair which had to be interrupted for the trip back Bobo at 4 pm. The Young Lasallians left Diébougou on a note of satisfaction but also of nostalgia. As coordinator of the group, I congratulate the young people for all these achievements. I would also like to thank all the people who worked towards the success of this outing that makes young people even more dynamic. I would like to thank in a special way the community of Brothers of Diébougou and their collaborators for the warm welcome they have given us and for the many services for the success of all these activities. I thank the parents for their trust in allowing their children to participate in this outing. I thank Brother BAKO for facilitating the theme and for his artistic performance.

Young Lasallian one day, Young Lasallian forever!

Live Jesus in our hearts ... forever.

*Brother Judes TRAORE*

*District of West Africa*





# Congo : Visit of the delegate Director of CARLA

As part of the partnership between the NGO ACTEC and the Confederation of Associations of the Lasallian Network of Africa (CARLA), I carried out a mission of formation and follow-up of the Saint Georges College project of the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Congo Kinshasa from 18 February to 05 March 2019.

My mission went very well thanks to the Brothers of the District and in particular those of the Holy Mary Community who invested many efforts. I am infinitely grateful to them.

I first started with a training course on the CFA 3M software developed since 1991 by Brother Enrique CEPERO. The auditors were the Prefects, the Directors and Bursars of the schools and colleges of the Brothers in Kinshasa. This mission was an opportunity to discuss with the leaders of the different schools in Kinshasa and the Brothers of the Communities of Tumba, Matadi and Boma.

From these discussions I noted that the Institute of the Brothers is one of the pioneers in Education in Congo Kinshasa with the first community created in 1909 in Boma.

It should therefore be noted that although the private schools belonging to the Brothers stand proudly in some places, this is not the case with the contracted schools under the name "Brothers of the Christian Schools". These schools are for the mostly the first ones that were built by the Brothers, I want to mention the St. George Elementary School, the Tumba Primary School, and the Boma Mungu Institute 1 and 2 schools in Boma. According to the history, these schools were taken from the Institute of the Brothers by the reform of President Mobutu in his policy of "zairianization" (nationalization) in 1974. Since then, these schools have not experienced any rehabilitation. The logic of the contracted schools would be that the government to take over the rehabilitation work, but nothing is done.



Therefore, the Brothers who are in charge of these schools find themselves very embarrassed and have no choice but to work with the existing infrastructure which is in a very scary decay. These buildings whose rotten roofs wait for a small wind of any tornado to come down collapsing on children sitting 3 to 4 by bench need rehabilitation.

Should these schools not be closed? But the question is, who would like to close them? This is neither the Congolese government, leave alone the Brothers! Closing these schools would mean killing the soul of the Brothers' schools, removing from the Brothers the very essence of their mission of "Education for the poor children" because most of the children who attend are from poor families.

The priorities of the District are increasingly focused on private schools, yet the contracted schools also bear the name "Brothers of the Christian Schools". Their appearance no longer reflects the proud image of the Schools of the Institute of Brothers! It is necessary to do something since the government does not intend to do anything.

*Kouabenan Roland YAO*

*Delegate Director of CARLA*



# USA: Immersion dans la réalité des immigrants.

Once a year, Saint Mary's University (Winona campus) organizes a cultural immersion experience for volunteer students. This immersion is called a SOUL trip. SOUL means Serving Others United in Love. This year, I had the opportunity to join the group that went to El Paso from February 23 to March 3, 2019. El Paso is a city in the state of Texas that borders Mexico. The goal of going to El Paso was to visit immigrants, share their experience and support the various voluntary associations that strive to offer hospitality to these vulnerable people who are immigrants. The associations visited play different roles: some welcome and host immigrants while others defend their rights. Finally, there are associations whose mission is to promote social integration. The highlights of our stay were marked by the visit of some immigrants in the prison of El Paso and the service of a meal. We also had the experience of sleeping in an immigrants' reception center. Eventually, we went to the fence between the U.S.A. and Mexico. It must be said that living close to the reality of immigrants was marked by mixed feelings. On the one hand, I have experienced frustration and confusion in front of men, women and children who have left everything to become more vulnerable in a foreign land. On the other hand, I have felt the hope, empathy, solidarity and a sense of community that people of goodwill develop to welcome immigrants. Faced with this human suffering, I felt challenged by the profound question of God to Cain: "What have you done with your brother?" In other words, the distraught eyes of the immigrants I met constitute cries that have become silent because of injustice, pride, indifference and contempt for the dignity of the human person. We ended our experience at the Way of the Cross in memory of the dead immigrants. We have also presented to all those who are still suffering on the path of immigration to Christ, in whom every burden can become a source of hope and salvation.

*Brother Guillaume YAME,*

*Student at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (U.S.A.)*



**WE ARE ALL  
IMMIGRANTS. SOME  
PEOPLE HAVE  
FORGOTTEN THAT.**

# Calendar of the Brother General Councillor

| Dates                     | Events  |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>March 2019</b>         |   |
| 28 January to 8 March     | 14 <sup>th</sup> session of the General Council |
| 10 to 16 March            | Visit in Eritrea                                |
| 16 to 22 March            | Visit South Sudan (Juba, Rumbek)                |
| 23 March                  | Addis Abeba - Abidjan                           |
| <b>April</b>              |   |
| <b>2 April</b>            | Meeting with Brother Visitors Paulin and Julien |
| 6 April                   | Tricentenary celebration in Rouen               |
| 9, 10, 11 April           | Solidarity South Sudan Board meeting            |
| 12 to 21 April            | Visit Congo Kinshasa                            |
| 23 April                  | Rome- Panama                                    |
| <b>May - October</b>      |   |
| 26 April to 6 May         | Visit Panama – Costa Rica – Guatemala           |
| 7 to 9 May                | Conference RELAL in Guadalajara                 |
| 10 and 11 May             | Visite to San Juan de los Lagos                 |
| 12 to 13 May              | Guadalajara-Mexico- Madrid-Rome                 |
| 15 May                    | Tricentenary celebration in Rome                |
| 16 May                    | Audience with the Pope at noon                  |
| 20 May to 21 June         | 15 <sup>th</sup> session of the General Council |
| 28 May to 8 June          | Formation of new Visitors                       |
| 20 June                   | Rome-Abidjan                                    |
|                           |   |
| 18 au 22 July             | Annual retreat of the Regional community        |
| August                    |   |
| 29 July – 31 August       | 2 RELAF regional CILs in Abidjan                |
| September                 |   |
| 2 September to 11 October | 16 <sup>th</sup> session of the general Council |
| <b>November</b>           |   |
| 4-6 November              | Conference of Brother Visitors in Nairobi       |
| 27, 28, 29 November       | Solidarity South Sudan Board meeting à Rome     |
| <b>December</b>           |   |
| 26 – 31 December          | Chapter District of West Africa                 |

To visit the web sites of the Regions of the Institute

RELAF: Région Lasallienne Afrique-Madagascar. [www.relaf.info](http://www.relaf.info)

RELEM: Région Lasallienne Europe-Méditerranée. [www.relem.org](http://www.relem.org)

RELAL: Region Latino Americana Lasallista. [www.relal.org.co](http://www.relal.org.co)

RELAN: Région Lasallienne de l'Amérique du Nord. [www.lasallian.info](http://www.lasallian.info)

PARC: Pacific Asia Regional Conference. [www.lasalle-parc.org](http://www.lasalle-parc.org)