

MISSION REPORT # 4
Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus
Reaching out to the “Poorest of the Poor”
 Mouila, Gabon, Africa – September 7, 2013
 by Rev. Canon Henry Fragelli

Dear Friend of the Mission,

My former Spiritual Director repeatedly told me that the rarest of all virtues was gratitude. Why not then begin this *Mission Report* by this rare beautiful pearl?

1. A big Thank You to Divine Providence, to our Blessed Mother, for so many blessings They have bestowed upon the Mission. They are countless.
2. I would like to wholeheartedly thank my dear Carmelite Sisters, our Sisters Adorers, Benedictine Sisters, Poor Clare Sisters, Sisters of the Precious Blood and Sisters of Charity for their continuous prayers for me and the Mission. But also for your prayer, with a special mention for the organized prayers of so many children.
3. Thank you all for your friendship, your affection, your caring, and your continuous generous support.

To the smallest details, the beauty of this Mission is due to your generosity. See, for example, this picture of our “little” chapel’s altar:



the new candlesticks, the new crystal flower vases, the new altar linens, the sanctuary lamp, the new carpet, new vestments.



All donated by you. Doesn’t it move you to know that out in the middle of the African jungle, Jesus has this beautiful altar, provided by you, where every day the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is celebrated for your intentions?



Pictures on the left: *Beautiful vestments donated by the Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles. Not to mention the 30 lovely altar boy cassocks donated by YOU.*

4. My VERY SPECIAL THANKS to our generous Monthly Donors. They give me peace of mind in continuing the Mission’s work. They and their families are remembered daily in my Mass intentions.

To all of you: Please know that not the smallest donation, the simplest prayer, a care package, a letter of encouragement or just a kind gesture, goes unnoticed here at the Mission. Less yet, I’m sure, by the Heavenly Father.

BEGINNING TO BE... “OLD NEWS”?

However, I could not fail to notice that our “Mission Report # 3” caused very few responses compared to Mission Reports # 1 and 2. Is the Mission beginning to become “old news?”

In the present Mission Report # 4 you will see how we were able, by God’s grace, to finally inaugurate the new “big” chapel. This is not an “end” rather just a beginning. This Report will

also show how, thank God, we were able to go from a Mission that was practically abandoned, to gaining a prominent place in the public attention. Again: this is NOT an “end” rather only the foundation for greater darings in the pursuit of saving souls. Your continuous prayer and support are needed today more than ever. Please don't let the Mission become “old news” in your mind and heart. For better or for worse we are together in this Mission, side-by-side in the same trenches.

TWO MONTHS OF INTENSE WORK

In preparation for the inauguration of the new “big” chapel and our Prior General's visit we had two very intense months of work. The scheduled date was Sunday, August 11. We had no time to lose.

THE EVIL ONE.

I think that, other than the serpents, the devil has earned a special mention in this Mission Report for showing us far too many times and quite evidently, how much he did not want the new chapel to be finished. If I were to narrate all the troubles we had to get the Chapel ready... I wouldn't write anything else. Yes, he stuck his dirty paw and tail in everything he could. On the days leading up to the chapel's inauguration we had (just to give an example) power outages 3, 4, 7 times a day, for several hours at a time. There were whole days of work that were wasted. It was very frustrating. But... we kept on smiling knowing the evil one was not happy.



Cutting down old, dry or simply dead trees. Then... uprooting them.

This pile of wood will be, in the weeks to follow, transformed into twenty church pews and benches.

WORK HERE IS... DIFFERENT.

One more reality about being a Missionary in Africa.



Most workers are very simple people with no schooling whatsoever. So... one has to be there ALL the time less they make mistakes, at times... unfixable. Observe these two pictures. I had to be absent for a few of days so I left as “administrator” one that I thought was a bit more skillful. One day he informs me that: “*For some reason the grids are not in the center of the pillars*” (picture on left.) I told him to immediately stop the work. Upon my return I couldn't believe my eyes. But... there was no use in complaining. I made casings myself so that the grids would be well centered on the pillars.



Things like this happen EVERY day. One has to be there with them ALL the time.

I AM NOT A MASON ... but I guess that being a Missionary... being a mason comes with the “job description.” ☺ Anything out of the ordinary I have to do it myself. For example this fountain we built right outside of the new bakery.



Watch them (3 « masons ») watching! Even the tiles I had to cut them myself otherwise... But at the end... look how happy they are! ☺ They can be very charming and candid in this regard. I just hope that they learn something at the end. If they do... it is all worth it.

Like in any other place that I lived before in my life (and... I've lived in many countries before) they need to be led primarily by example. Here this seems to be an imperative. They are good people, but that is how it is. And this is not a joke, but I have it all calculated already: when I am working with them, they produce 3 (three) times more. That's just how it is out here.



GIFTS

One very ungratifying aspect of life out here is that when someone comes to talk to you it is ALWAYS to ask for money! (And I am “letting off steam a little bit. ☺) Giving them repeatedly the benefit of the doubt, I have been fooled many times. Some come with beautiful conversion stories, even pretending to have a vocation or wanting to help the *Mission*. At the end... it is always money that they want. But... there is hope. There was ONE exception to that. One day, this young man came to the *Mission* to offer gifts. I could not believe it! So... we had to take a picture! ☺



BUT... THAT CAN CHANGE!



It is a joy, and very gratifying, to see how little by little, our small community, our faithful, are showing signs to be different than the rest in this regard. Upon my return from a quick trip, they welcomed me back offering an “African diner” that they paid for themselves. It was a nice and encouraging surprise. Also, one of the workers, upon receiving his salary, gave me twenty dollars back saying: “It’s a gift for the *Mission*”. I found out later on that he had been encouraging the others to do the same, in gratitude for all that they receive at the *Mission*. See...!!! Never lose hope!



CONFESSOR

I thought it was about time that I introduce you to my confessor, Fr. Jean. What a good and holy Priest he is. He just celebrated his 52nd anniversary of Priestly Ordination. Needless to say how much I owe to this good Priest. So please keep him in your prayers too.



ACCOUNTING

Though it is not required by law, we keep at the *Mission* a tight accounting of ALL expenses.



Life experience has taught me that when the devil can't destroy God's work on the open battlefield, he comes in through the back door, the accounting, spreading doubt and slander. Since we want God to win this battle, we're keeping that back door well shut. Every penny is accounted for.

GETTING TO KNOW A LITTLE MORE ABOUT THE REALITY OF...

"MISSIONARY LAND"



Hygiene is not always a priority. This is my barber shop; the best in town. As you can see, this shop hasn't seen a broom in years. Of course, after every haircut I go straight to the shower.



This is a very common scene. Streets filled with garbage that just piles up for days. The smell and the gasses are at times unbearable. And right next to it people selling vegetable and other foods. No wonder there is so much malaria!



BUT... THERE ARE CONSOLATIONS

This, for example, is something one does not see often in other parts of the world: Processing through a neighborhood with the Blessed Sacrament on a sick call. It is one of the "**Joys of the Priesthood in Africa**".

The Gabonese soul is profoundly religious and marvels at the divine. I have great hopes as to the wonderful things God's grace will do in these candid souls. I am especially curious to see the beauty that will shine forth when their souls fully open to the tender devotion of our Blessed Mother.



BUILDING A NEW GARAGE

Having lost our garage to the making of a nice entrance for the *Mission*, we are building a new garage to keep our car safe. (There have been car robberies.) On the second floor of the garage there will be a space for an *electricity generator* we are hoping to have someone donate to us one

day in order to cope with the very frequent electricity outages. This becomes an imperative as we



are running more and more educational programs at the *Mission* that cannot afford interruption.

NEW ENTRANCE TO THE MISSION

At the new entrance to the Mission the wall takes a rounded shape to serve as background for a large beautiful statue of Our Lady of Grace (picture). She is 4'8" tall and will be placed on a pedestal that is 3' tall. Surrounded by a garden of flowers, of course.



DONOR NEEDED

How would you like to give this statue a place in perhaps thousands of African hearts?
The statue costs US\$ 1,350.00.
Estimated shipping to Gabon is US\$ 2,000.00.

OUR FIRST VOLUNTEER



Andreas Heidemann, the son of very good friends, was the first volunteer to generously "take the risk". His visit was a joy for us all, and as you can see in other pictures throughout this report, Andreas helped us so, so much. And... he survived! 😊

While here, he celebrated his 21th birthday. So, our little *African family* gathered around him to show him our affection and gratitude. As a gift, token of our appreciation, we gave him... what else? a little elephant carved in local stone.



MEDICAL DOCTORS

Some medical doctors have contacted me in the thought of coming to volunteer at the *Mission*. And they wondered if they could practice medicine in Gabon. I have good news for you. I have checked that with the *Director of the Hospital* as well as with the *State Public Health Director*. The law foresees largely that situation. In fact, considerable part of the Gabonese medical staff is provided by volunteers from other countries. Please contact me for detail. I have more information for you.

ALTAR BOYS

This group of young men is turning out to be a fine



group. Besides weekly catechism, they have an altar service practice every Wednesday and... when they can they sure enjoy a soccer game. And... they are good at it!

WHILE WE WERE AT WORK

... the Mission hosted **two Youth Camps**. Due to all the work for the inauguration of the chapel, we kept the Youth Camps small this year. They were nonetheless



very blessed. First the **BOYS CAMP:**



DIVERSIFIED TASKS IN RESTORING A MISSION



Restoring the altar missal as well as the missals for the faithful which are given to us second hand (used.)

ADORATION



Weekly Adoration is part of our most important spiritual nourishment. A moment of peace to look forward to.

PR... WITH THE "BIG" AND WITH THE "SIMPLE"



PR work is not really my "cup of tea", but very necessary for the Mission's good reputation. So... we got a lot of that going on all the time. We make good and new friendships every week over a good meal. Last picture: Celebrating my 5th Ordination anniversary with Fr. Thomas, the *Trinitarian Sisters* and those that live at the *Mission*: Teddy, Mamoudou and Noëline.

GILRS CAMP



For both the boys and girls camps the ladies that helped with the cooking were able to already use the new bakery as

the camp kitchen. A true improvement from past years.



OUR MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION... REACHING ITS END



Our pick up is of so much service, but... it is giving signs of age. Every month I spend an average of US\$ 800 on it and several visits to the mechanic. We just can't do this much longer. Every month something goes wrong with it.

Again a very generous DONOR IS NEEDED.

I am very seriously contemplating just leaving the car in Libreville and borrowing it when we need to bring things to Mouila. We can't afford this any longer.



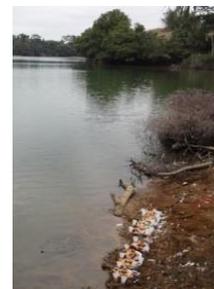
JUST... OTHER ASPECTS OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS LIFESTYLES



Picture 1: This is a "furniture store." They put the furniture for sale right out in the open. If it rains they just cover the furniture with a large plastic cover... until the rain stops. Picture 2: A clothing store. Good luck finding your own size or something that is actually new. Picture 3: Speaking for the great richness and potential of this country, you see trucks like this, caravans of trucks like this, loaded with the most precious and beautiful woods.



Another very "respected belief" out here is that of the Ladyfish (La Sirène). Even Catholics believe in it. Just a mile up the road from us there is a beautiful lake called "Lac Blue" considered "mystic" since it is the place where the "Sirène" lives. Some of our neighbors were actually quite upset when our seminarians went there for a swim. As you can see in the picture, some even leave full meals on the lakeshore for the Sirène to eat. I often tell them that our Sirène must be a very holy one since she seems to fast all year round. She never touches the food. ☺



ODDS & ENDS



To encourage in the children the devotion to Our Blessed Mother (picture on left), on the feast of the Assumption, after Mass, I gave all of them a little gift. "Because we have such a good mother in heaven... we all rejoice today." Again, these little toys were part of a "Care Package"

sent by one of you.



And did you know that every time I go up to Libreville I cross the Equator? (Picture on right)

Did you know also that at the Mission we have a vegetable garden? (Picture on left)



Marc-Antoine who is becoming, by the way, an accomplished soccer player. And... with style! ☺

Noëline and her new oven. She is a wonderful cook.



SERPENTS

I thought that by now I could suppress this chapter from our *Mission Reports*. But no! Not yet. As soon as the serpents were gone, guess who moved in? Mickey Mouse... African version! ☹️ That is: nasty and smart. I will not waste your time with the narrative of the weeks of battles, day and night, we waged against these cute (on paper only) little creatures. But today I am happy to inform you that the *Mission* is snake-free, cucaracha-free, flies-free AND mice-free.



BACK TO WORK

After a month and an half of battles with the SEEG (Electric company) just three weeks prior to inauguration day, they connected the electricity needed for us to run our heavy-duty wood tools.



First we pulled new and adequate wiring from the electrical box to the chapel. (2) Then went to Libreville and brought a technician to install the machine and teach us how to use it. (3) Then... we went to work: we had an altar, 20 church benches and altar rail to make in less than two weeks. (4) Painting of the chapel.



(1 & 2) Drawing and cutting of design for the altar railing. (3) The first altar railing is up. (4) The making of the altar. All done with extremely hard and heavy African wood. For the altar railing I had hired a carpenter, but as soon as he saw the job... he told me it was too much for him. So... we did it ourselves.



Pictures: Just a few samples of so much other work that thanks to your generosity we were



able to do to restore the Mission. The finishing of the porch. The digging of another septic tank. The varnishing of our furniture. And the landscaping (next page.)



MONSIGNOR WACH'S VISIT AND INAUGURATION OF THE NEW "BIG" CHAPEL



Monsignor's visit was a blessing. We enjoyed many moments of great conversation where he told us so many stories about the first years of the Mission and so much more.



INAUGURATION OF THE CHAPEL

It all started outside with the blessing of the new chapel.



Then followed a Solemn High Mass.

In the front row, amongst others, the Administrator of the Province, sent by the Governor to represent him. Next to him the Colonel Commander of the Police in Mouila,



and other civil authorities.

NOTE: Neither the altar nor the pews and benches were ready, but...



it was enough. Now, little by little we are



finishing the details. We must still wait a month to be able to varnish since the wood is still very wet inside. Above: detail of the altar: our Patron Saints carved in local stone.



A RECEPTION FOLLOWED THE INAUGURATION MASS



Following the blessing of the new chapel and Holy Mass a “Grand Reception” was given at the Mission’s gardens to the 200 faithful present. They had then the occasion to greet and chat with our Prior General.

A big « thumbs up » to the *Daughters of the Mission* who organized all the food and drinks for the reception. This group of ladies is also turning out to be a very nice group at the service of the Mission. They constitute also a Prayer Group and work at the Mission’s sewing workshop.

MONDAY: RECEPTION AND LUNCH FOR THE NOTABLE OF MOUILA

The following day we offered an appetizer and lunch to many of our new friends and other “personalities” of Mouila. I was expecting only about half of them to show up, but in fact they ALL came. On the occasion, for those that were new to the Mission, we gave a tour of the new chapel and workshops.

Among others we were honored by the presence of the Governor, two Mayors, the Police Commander, the Director of Gabon Telecom, the Director of Public Work, the President of our Neighborhood (very important figure in the Gabonese society), Fr. Thomas, a director of the Hospital, several Military Officers, the Principals of the two most important schools of Mouila, several teachers of those schools, in one word... all of Mouila was represented at this event.



The Governor honored us with his presence. But before, he did a full tour of the Mission.





At the end of the dinner **Mr. Pierrot NGUEMA**, *Director of Public Works* and a good friend of the Mission, dressed in traditional African attire, made a moving speech thanking the *Institute* for the re-opening of the Mission.

And once again, the *Daughters of the Mission* did a great job preparing and serving the dinner. I was surprised to see their new “uniform” that they made for themselves at the Mission sewing workshop.



AUGUST 16: NATIONAL PRAYER DAY



The same week I was invited for the “*National Prayer Day*” where the Governor lays a wreath of flowers at the cemetery in a simple but moving ceremony. Following the there was a reception at Town Hall where I was able to make new and good contacts for the Mission. The Governor himself introduced me (picture 3) to the local Magistrates.

AUGUST 17: INDEPENDENCE DAY



On Independence Day I was invited to assist the military parade from the Governor’s tribune. On this occasion I met with our Bishop and good friend of the *Institute*.

RECEPTION AT THE PREFECT'S HOME

While assisting the military parade, the Prefect, who was seated next to me (and who has visited the Mission already three times) invited me to a private reception that he was giving, at his home, following the parade.



BANQUET AT THE GOVERNOR'S HOME

Just a couple of days prior, the Governor sent us an invitation to attend the closing of Independence Day festivities: a banquet offered by him and his wife to all “personalities” of the Province. At the occasion, I had a very nice talk with our Bishop, Msgr. Madega. He then scheduled his first visit to the Mission for the last week of September.



I was happy to find in our Governor a sincere Christian, a good man at heart, loved by his people. He truly appreciated the *Mission* and the work there done for the formation of the youth.



Here in Gabon, more than in any other country I have lived in, the “who you know” is very important. So I need not to expand on how important all these contacts are for the Mission. But, most importantly, as Catholic Missionaries we also know that: “...*other sheep I have, that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.*” (Jn. 10, 16) So, to fulfill the Lord’s mandate, we reach out to all.

Dear Friend of the Mission,

As you can see, the Mission really took an outstanding place in the “public square” and most importantly, in the minds and hearts of so many.

This is due to God’s grace, no doubt; due to Our Lady’s maternal help, but also due to your generosity and allow me to say... a lot of hard work.

As Msgr. Wach told me: “**The Mission is alive again!**”

We have not yet closed our first year here in Mouila, but I think that, under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we can look forward to wonderful things coming out of this Mission. Many fruits of grace.

But most importantly, please don’t forget: we are in this boat together! 😊

BACK TO THE REAL LIFE... SHOWERING WITH BOTTLES

One ~~thing~~ you will learn very quickly give you the recipe: for a quick "Sunday shower" you need 5. Or, a.m. ☺ At night there is always water Yes, I'm trying to be humorous,



out here is how to shower with bottles. I can everyday shower you need 3 bottles. For a another formula, you take your shower at 2:00 pressure. but... it is not always funny.

So again... DONOR NEEDED

We would like to install 2 water tanks at the Mission so that we can have water pressure for the kitchen, the laundry room, the bathrooms, the bakery, the garden, the workshops and... everything else.

In doing so I would get a third one to install in the Sacristy. Here people have a beautiful devotion to the use of Holy Water. Every day, after Mass or on other times of the day, faithful come with 3, 5 or more jugs of water at a time to ask me to bless. In a country infested by witchcraft, the use of Holy Water is something we want to encourage.

The price of these three 500 liters tanks is US\$ 1,600.00. The cost of their installation is estimated US\$ 2,800.00 (We will have to re-route a lot of the existing water pipe lines. It will be a major job. But well worth it.)



Dear Friend and Benefactor of the Mission,

I will not end this letter by making the exhaustive list of all that needs to be done at the Mission, like I did in previous letters. It seems to me so obvious. The fact is that: WE HAVE ONLY STARTED.

I will just mention the need that we have of **Monthly Donors** to sustain everything that by God's grace, and your generosity, has been developing at the Mission.

Once the "big" chapel has been inaugurated, and the summer being over, we will:

- Re-focus on the Catechism Classes,
- **We will focus, these next two months, in consolidating and developing all the programs already started, namely:**
- Men's group. Altar Boy's training. They will also start etiquette and table serving lessons.
- Sewing and embroidery workshop (a volunteer will be at the Mission for one month, starting on September 13, to teach embroidery to the ladies.)
- The carpentry workshop. The boys will start their first classes in mid-September.
- The bakery (another volunteer will be here this month to teach pastry making at the bakery.)
- We will focus our attention on the *Daughters of the Mission* in so that they form a prayer group to promote the Holy Rosary at that Mission.
- We will also have our first "Choir Seminar" uniting the two choirs: Libreville's and ours.
- To continue drawing the public attention to the Mission we are planning a "kermesse" (fair) for the beginning of October.
- The beginning of the school year will also see free advanced English classes offered at the Mission, done to attract to the Mission a more intellectual type. Many have already signed up.
- Continue building the wall around the Mission.
- Continue the building of the garage building.
- Finish the church pew and altar of our chapel.
- Finish the guestroom's porch. And many other works that have been started and need following through.

**ALL OF THIS NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT. PLEASE JOIN US. JOIN THE MISSION.
GOD REWARD YOU!**

*INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO DONATE TO THE
Mission St. Therese of the Infant Jesus
Mouila, Gabon - Africa*

To safely send a donation or a monthly donation to the Mission is simple:

Step 1

- a. Go to www.institute-christ-king.org.
- b. Click on *Shrine of Christ the King*.
- c. Click on *Donate*.
- d. Click on *African Missions*, and follow the prompts for donating. You can make a one-time donation or set up for a recurring donation.

Step 2

- a. Send an email to our secretary, Mrs. Mary Hall, at info@institute-christ-king.org to let her know that you wish your donation to be sent to the *Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus*, in Mouila, Africa. Or if you wish, to make it clearer: “for Fr. Fragelli’s Mission”. *
- b. IMPORTANT: Copy that email to me at fragellihenrique@hotmail.com so that I can follow up on it every month.

* You will get a yearly tax-deductible receipt for your donation.

* If you wish you can contact Mrs. Mary Hall at: (773) 363-7409 ext. 3.

May God repay you a hundred-fold. Your name and your family will be remembered in ALL the Masses said at the *Mission*.

Please consider joining me in this *Mission* through your generous donation.

And please be assured of my prayers and immense gratitude. Being out here is quite a challenge. Having you “on board” means a lot to me.

May God bless you and Our Lady be always in your good heart.

Rev. Canon H. Fragelli

PS. If you wish to receive this and future *Mission Reports* via e-mail, please send me your email address. I am certain that in the electronic version the pictures will be sharper and more interesting.

Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus
BP 17 – Mouila, GABON - AFRICA
Tel. (241) 04.80.70.61
fragellihenrique@hotmail.com