

MISSION REPORT # 7
Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus
Reaching out to the “Poorest of the Poor”
Mouila, Gabon, Africa – September 8, 2014
by Rev. Canon Henry Fragelli

(For any new reader: This *Mission Report* is a letter to my family and friends.
So don't be surprised to find it very family-like casual and with little order.)

Dear Friend of the Mission,

Due to the abundance of work and diversity of activities that the Good Lord has blessed us with, I have not been able to keep in touch with each one of you as I would want, but please know that we have not forgotten you, on the contrary, at the Mission our daily lives are paced by the thought of gratitude for your good friendship, your prayers and your generous support. Let me tell you a little bit now about what has happened at the Mission these two past months:

GRATITUDE: The pictures speak for themselves. A big THANK YOU to the very generous donors that got us our new truck. EVERYTHING changes when you have a reliable means of transportation.



GRATITUDE: is never too much.

I truly wish (and the Mission needs it so badly) that we had a LOT more of monthly donors. But we are blessed with 24 of you, and we are so grateful for the monthly sacrifice you make on behalf of the Mission. Not every month I am able to convey to you our gratitude. But I want you to know how obliging we are toward each one of you. How much each one of you is daily in our hearts and prayers. Not one of you is ever forgotten. You, your family and intentions, are remembered in the intentions of EVERY Holy Mass said at the Mission, as well as in the intentions of our weekly Adoration.

BAPTISMS:

My experience as a Priest is still a very short one, but in this brief experience I can say I have never seen such sudden and visible change in a child when baptized as I have seen in Africa. It's one of the most consoling aspects of Missionary work. But this time we introduced something new: after each Baptism we offered and consecrated the baby to the loving care of our Blessed Mother (see picture.)



CORPUS CHRISTI – ADULT BAPTISMS

On the Feast of *Corpus Christi* we had the two first Adult Baptisms of the year. (We should have 20 more before the year comes to a close.) Mainly we baptized Martha, who we sent for and “experience” of two months with our *Sisters Adorers*, in Germany. **See pictures:**

1. Baptisms. Martha took the name of Martha-Thérèse, and Mamita (Martha’s aunt) took the name of Perpétue-Félicité. (We now call her “Félicité” – Felicity)
2. Following Baptism: Consecration to Our Lady.
3. *Corpus Christi* Procession (the canopy for the Blessed Sacrament was made with materials sent by you in the “Care Packages”. Thank you.)
4. Following the Procession: a little reception. Newly baptized dance with their Godmothers.



5. Martha-Therese with our *Sisters Adorers*. Perhaps a first African Vocation? Please keep her in your prayers. I have received but great reports from the Sisters about Martha-Therese. They are very happy with her. She is also learning so much from them. Again, a big thank you for those generous souls who paid for her air fare.



MALARIA

Often I get questions about malaria. Yes, it is the sickness that kills the most around here. It comes – among many other reasons - from poor hygiene. Look at the picture on the right. This is a VERY common scene. People just through their garbage on the streets and it rots there for days, weeks. This (picture) is Libreville, the Capital. Imagine what a provincial town like Mouila is like, where most people live in wood houses that have no windows, where not all have electricity and most don’t have running water. Luckily we have all of that at the Mission. Hygiene above all.



We just lost a good friend and wonderful Priest, Fr. Paul Struszkowski (picture on left) to malaria. He was only 38 years old. Please pray for him.

BOY'S & GIRL'S CAMPS



On occasions like these children manifest surprising talents. It's somewhat mesmerizing to see it kind of unravel before our eyes. Creativity and daring only begin to describe it.



Even more fascinating is seeing them manifest their faith in ways one had not seen before. Perhaps only because of the fact that they are among their similar.



The program consisted of daily Mass, preaching, then formation meetings, processions, outings, games, visit to historical sites and others, fishing competitions, and of course, for the girls... the famous *Cooking Contest*.



This time the judge was no less than Madame Isabelle, Mayor of Mouila.



Every day the boys, then the girls, had their chores: ground keeping, table service, dish washing, preparation of the bond fire, etc.

Oh, that was the best part: the bond fire. Each team (separated in four colors as the scarfs indicate) had to, each evening, prepare the recitation of a poem, the singing of



a song and the enacting of a skit.

Both camps were organized by a group of volunteers, faithful of the Mission, who generously stayed, as organizers and chaperones, at the camps for their whole duration. As I told them later: this was the best part of the Camps. The fact that, this time, it was not all run by Father, but that we now have a committed group of volunteers.



THE NEW MAYOR'S INSTALATION

PR work is an important part of the Mission's activity. Like in most Latin countries, in Gabon it is not so much who you are that matters what who your friends are.



Newly elected Mayor, a hardworking man, bearing the name of Peter Claver, quickly became a good friend of the Mission. On the above picture: him, his wife and his staff. Then a dinner at his home.

THE "NEW" CHAPEL

The Church's motherly wisdom always depicted on the walls and stain glass window of its churches, that which She wished to teach her children. In the following pictures you will see the processes of painting a fresco of the **Seven Sacraments** on the back wall of our Chapel. It was all done by local artists. We also tiled the chapel and "re-inaugurated" it on the feast of the *Assumption of Our Blessed Mother*.

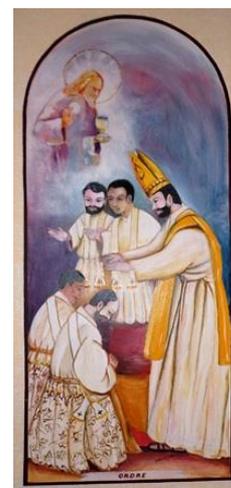


Some have asked: *What about the seventh Sacrament? Well...* it's in the center, the Eucharist. We need not to represent that of which



we are blessed to have the reality.

Once again: may God bless and reward the generous donors that made this possible.



VOLUNTEERS & VISIT TO THE MISSIONS



This summer we were blessed with the visit of 4 volunteers. Canon Lefevre, Vice Rector of our Seminary, as well as 3 other young men from France.

Canon Lefevre I invited just... because he is a very good friend. I never expected him to say yes to my invitation. I leaped in joy when I got his email saying... "why not?" His whole visit was a blessing to the Mission. He did an enormous good to all here.



The 3 young men were also a great help and a joy to have around. They are the sons of good friends of mine. In order to offer these young men an "adventurous program", we did the visit to some of our former Missions in the south. Missions that were temporarily closed due to the successive sickness (malaria) of the several Missionaries that were sent here.

It was touching to see how the faithful have kept the faith, to see how they persevered in prayer, and to hear their plea for us to come back. I don't know why, but I just felt inspired to tell them: "Pray, and we will come back!"

At each one of the Missions we rang the bell, gathered the faithful, said the rosary, preached and imposed the *Miraculous Medal* of Our Lady.

Following you will see pictures of some of these beautiful Missions we will soon "reconquer" by the grace of God." Some have been well kept up, other not, as you will see.



AN ADVENTUROUS TRIP OF FAITH THROUGH THE JUNGLES OF AFRICA



Not all the Missions are accessible by road. So... watch out for the mean hippopotamus!



Not in every place the altars at the Missions were clean enough for us to say our daily Mass, so we said them at our lodging place. Lot of blessing, distributing rosaries, imposing the Miraculous Medals.



OUR VOLUNTEERS

They were also a great help at the Mission. Thanks to them we were able to advance much of the



work and prepare the chapel for its "re-inauguration"



BUT.... we do treat well our volunteers ☺. It is not all work, work, work. A little excursion to see some wild life: Elephants, pelicans, wild buffalos.



A stop at the ocean for a good swim and the purchase of 100 pounds of fresh fish.



The locals had never seen a Priest so "sportif" playing soccer with them. Had they read the story of Saint John Bosco... they wouldn't have been so surprised. But... they were always edified.



Travelling through adventurous roads; crossing the Equator; visiting other Missions, museums and in the evening... why not: a relaxing moment playing *Canasta*. A "must" at the Mission ☺.

THINGS WE ONLY DO BECAUSE OF OUR VOLUNTEERS: Visiting... the wales.



It is all smiles... until you see that 40 ton "monster" coming right at your boat. (Picture) Then... gently they play all around you.



They were seven this time, and surely knew how to rock our boat. By then we were all soaking wet, but... had great fun. (Except my camera ☹️. It “drank” so much salty water... these were the last pictures it ever took.)

Then..., of course, the whales needed to “show off”. What a jump!!! Let me tell you: 40 tons splashing right next to you... surely makes you a pious man instantaneously, if you are not one already. It was great! **Things we get to do only because of our young volunteers. ☺️**



THEN: JUST LOTS & LOTS OF WORK... CONSTANTLY.

Once, after my Ordination, Msgr. Schmitz told me that *“In our Institute the consecrated hands of a Priest are made for chalices and for calluses.”* Well... he didn’t need to convince me of that but.... It is at times consoling to remember.



From baking bread, to making a brick oven, or working on the roof. Lucky me... to have such great quality helpers ☺️ (pictures on right.)

Above pictures: The making of benches around the bond-fire, the building of the new carpentry, and the water tower. (We will soon have water pressure all day long. Two years of showering with plastic bottles... it’s enough!)



Dear generous donor: For the past couple of months have I done little fundraising and as a consequence the donations dropped drastically. It is only natural. All these projects have come to a halt therefore. Please consider donating so that we can bring them to completion.

RETREAT FOR THE “Companions of Saint Joseph”.

This was the name that the “men’s group” chose for themselves in Libreville. So we thought of adopting the same name in Mouila. A retreat for both groups was then organized. Not all were able to attend but... it was a first one. Our many thanks to Commander MASSE, who coordinated it. In mid-October we will have our Second-joint-retreat. But this time it will be *the Companions of St. Joseph* from Mouila that will go to Libreville. It is a real blessing to see the men, little by little, becoming more and more committed to the Mission.



ODD & ENDS... to get to know better the Mission and... Gabon.

As the “dry season” comes to an end, great fires all over light up the night as flakes of ashes fall abundant from the skies. It is the Gabonese way of preparing the fields for the plantations in the “rainy season” that is about to begin. And, it is very efficient.



This is what they call here “**Taxi de brousse**” (Rural Taxi.) Safety and comfort is their priority. But... you do pay a couple extra bucks for the first class comfort of being inside the cabin.



Mission “mascots”. They are the “joy of the Mission”. *Marc-Antoine* and his inseparable friend *Chardin Moise*. They are good behaved little boys. They are only 3 years old, but already answer the prayers of daily Mass and sing in the choir. They will go to kindergarten this fall. On the second picture I am giving them slippers send from far, far away, by “Miss Cake”, as they call her (Miss Kate Serafino.)



Weekly Adoration is the breathing lung of the Mission. What a privilege to have HIM, right here, under our own roof!



Gabon is extremely rich in natural resources. 85% of the national territory is still untouched forest. From there, and in accordance with hundreds of “forest preservation laws & regulations”, they bring out tons of wood of great quality and exquisite beauty. Wood that we rarely see in Gabon because it is directly exported.



Saying goodbye to a great friend, perhaps the best one we had in the area. **Fr. Thomas Diouf** was recently reassigned. He is now furthering his theological studies in France. He is very missed by both his parish and by me. What a good Priest he is! Something to be always thankful to God for.



It is always a great joy, however, to have at the Mission old but faithful **Fr. Jean**, from Libreville. He is my confessor and loves to come to the Mission for a week of prayer, silence and rest.



Visitors: More and more often we get visits from a large diversity of people that have heard about the Mission. Just yesterday the Governor was “passing by” and stopped to “say hello”.

Pictures: (bottom right): Giving a tour to Madame MAGANGA, Congresswoman from Congo, who had heard of the Mission... from afar. (Top right): A farewell dinner for Marie, postulant of the Trinitarian Sister, our neighbors, to whom I gave Spiritual Direction, at the request of her Superior, for the year she was here . And then the visit of a confrere and great friend Abbe Fernando (Brazilian.)



Superior, for the year she was here . And then the visit of a confrere and great friend Abbe Fernando (Brazilian.)

Be ready... to remove a log from the road (it has happened to me so many times!), or pull a car out of the water.



You'll like this one: got it down. You might need it one day. ☺
If your car is over-heating because your radiator is punctured, just pour a can of tomato paste into it. According to Assane, our taxi driver, it



has a “one year warrantee”.

This is where we buy gravel for making cement. At the local creek. (Picture on left)



It is dug up from the bottom of the creek and brought to us in a log platform. Just like at... *Lowes or Builder's Square*. And on the picture on the right, you have what is the living quarters of most Gabonenses. And... this



is a very nice one.



Picture on the far right: Visit to a bakery at Tchibanga, where Mr. & Mrs. Lambotin, good friends of the Mission, give us a tour of their bakery and teach us how bread is made.



FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
 Re-inauguration of the Chapel.
 Imposition of the Miraculous Medal of Our Lady



It was a beautiful day! Canon Lefevre preached a touching sermon about the Blessed Virgin Mary. Abbe Bivoli – who was here visiting his family – was the Deacon at High Mass. The **Miraculous Medal of Our Lady** was conferred to 300 of the faithful. I figured: *“If we can’t baptize everyone yet... we can always put them under the protection of Our Lady.”* Among them were our *Trinitarian Sisters*; Mouila’s Prefect and his wife; Mouila’s Mayor Madame Isabelle; and Minister Alfred MABIKA, General Director of the Gabonese Post Office (see picture of me giving them a tour of the Mission).

Heaven opened wide its doors that day and poured graces “by the bucket”. But not only. It continues to this day. And that’s the beauty and effect of the **Sacramentals**. It is hard to go to town today and not see several using the **Miraculous Medal** of Our Blessed Mother. It makes my heart smile every time.



As always: a lot of preparation goes into making a such feast. The *Daughters of the Mission* were quite busy for several days. And if you are a mom ...the baby goes under the counter.



Then, with another team of volunteers, we prepared and posted all over town the invitation for the feast of the Assumption. Murals, bus stops, telephone pools.



SOLEMN HIGH MASS



BLESSING AND THE CONFERING OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL OF OUR LADY TO 300 FAITHFUL



THE MARIAN PROCESSION



RECEPTION – TOUR OF MISSION FOR THE AUTHORITIES – NEW FRIENDS



INDEPENDENCE DAY – A NATIONAL CELEBRATION

First the military parade,



followed by the parading of all the Corporations; then come that local traditional dances, even tribal.



Among the military parade, we could recognize some of our faithful. As for example: Major Dieu-Donné and the Commander of the Gendarmerie.



LAST BUT NOT LEAST: OUR FIRST MARRIAGE AT THE MISSION.



You would have to be in Africa to understand what a huge victory of grace it is to perform a Catholic marriage. Local tribal traditions make it virtually impossible. Parishes go years without a single marriage. We were already blessed with one and we hope to have two more until the end of the year.

CARE PACKAGES

The *Care Packages*, have been an important part of the history of this Mission. Being out here in the African jungle and receiving a package from someone that cares has an effect on the moral like words cannot describe. Not to mention that EVERYTHING they contain goes to very good use. I pray that God will one day reward these good and generous souls in a way proportional to the good that they do, though perhaps not fully knowing.



WHAT TO SEND? I suggest that, at each time, you send me and email and ask. Because the needs change all the time.

There are a few things that you can always send:

- Religious articles. Crucifixes, religious statues, medals, rosaries, etc.
- Ink for our printer: Inkjet Canon 35 and Inkjet Canon 36. We can always use those.
- Clothes for all ages. Just remember that here there is no winter. So: no winter clothes. (These clothes are not distributed indiscriminately, rather to the “*family of the Mission*” as to help them create a greater “*family bond*” with the Mission.)
- Then... just anything your heart wishes to offer the Mission... will go to good use, you can be assured. I am at times surprised to see how things I had never thought of, end up being so useful at the Mission.

FOR ALL PACKAGES USE THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:

VERY IMPORTANT: Do NOT put my name on the shipping address.

And once again: THANK YOU!

CBA MASSE
SP 85739
00864 – Armées
FRANCE

As mentioned above, ALL projects have come to a halt because of the lack of funding. To complete them (the main ones) we would need: New carpentry: \$4.500. Water tower: \$1.800. Store \$3.500. New office to receive the faithful: \$7.000. New Parish Hall: \$ 12.000. New sewing materials: \$3.000.

But mainly, please consider becoming a **Monthly Donor of the Mission**. The Mission can't exist and grow without donors that will generously commit on a regular basis so that the Mission's apostolate can have continuity. We are all together on this. I know it is a sacrifice. I wouldn't be asking if I didn't know what sacrifice is. Please consider becoming:

Dollar-a-Day – St. Therese's little way: a little sacrifice each day.	\$30 / month
Mission Supporter – There is not glory without sacrifice.	\$100 / month
Mission Builder – We will only take to Heaven that which we give away.	\$250 / month
Missionary from afar – True giving is self-giving.	\$500 / month

I pray that God and Our Blessed Mother will reward you generosity. Hope to hear from you soon.

HOW TO DONATE TO THE MISSION? It is safe and simple:

Step 1

- a. Go to www.institute-christ-king.org.
- b. Click on *Shrine of Christ the King*. (First on the list of Apostolates)
- c. Click on *Donate*. (Tab on a red colored row on the top of the page)
- d. Click on *African Missions*, (forth from the bottom up) and follow the prompts for donating. You can make a one-time donation or set up for a recurring donation. (Note that there is no “*Mouila Mission*”. Reason for “Step 2”)
- e. Do NOT try to “*Create a Profile*”. It can mess up things.

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.

* You can also send a donation to the Mission by sending a check to our headquarters in Chicago. Make sure you send it “*care of Mrs. Hall*” and that you indicate that your donation is for *Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus*, in Mouila, Africa.

Please consider joining me in this Mission through your generous monthly donation. Don't miss this chance of “being a Missionary” too.

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. I remember all of the Mission donors and their families in the intentions of my daily Holy Mass.

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

Rev. Canon H. Fragelli

Mission Saint Therese of the Infant Jesus, B.P. 17 – Mouila, GABON – AFRICA - Tel. (241) 04.80.70.61