



RAFMA REGIONAL MEETING

BENIN 2019

Minutes of RAFMA held in Benin at L'étoile Notre Dame January 29th to February 7th 2019

L'ETOILE NOTRE DAME BENIN – RAFMA -2019

PARTICIPANTS

SUPERIORS PRESENT

1. Dom Etienne Mboule	Koutaba
2. Dom Vedaste Vitchoho	Mokoto
3. Dom John Bosco Kamali	Victoria
4. Dom Peter Musongo	Kasanza
5. Dom John Chrysostom Randriamahazosa	Maromby
6. Br. Polycarp Winsungnim	Bamenda
7. Dom Marcellin Dhecadjevi	Kokoubu
8. Dom Matthew Onuh	Awhum
9. Dom Benedict Okakpu	Nsugbe
10. Dom Ogechukwu Ibe	Illah
11. Mother Genevieve Okakpo	L'Etoile N.D
12. Mother Hortense Mituga	Clarte' Dieu
13. Mother Augustine Kanyesigye	Butende
14. Mother Regina Nebo	Abakaliki
15. Mother Manuela Saltori	Huambo
16. Mother Anna Chiara Meli	Mvanda
17. Mother Agnes Brugere	Ampibanjinana
18. Mother Philomena Kalimbanya	Kibungo

INVITED

1. Dom Eamon Fitzgerald : Abbot General
2. Dom Armand Veilleux : Scourmont
3. Mother Rachel Agoukpe : counselor of the Abbot General
4. Sr. Yvette : L'etoile Notre Dame

SECRETARIES

1. Fr. Justin Muzindusi (French Speaking)
2. Sr. Elizabeth Nakimbugwe (English speaking)

DELAGATES

1. Br. Michael Were Victoria
2. Sr. Rose Iburabwize Butende

29th-30TH January, 2019

OPENING

At 8:45 the participants convened in the hall and the president of RAFMA Dom John Bosco asked Mother Genevieve to welcome the participants, who at the same time welcomed the new superiors of RAFMA. There after the president gave some information on how the meeting will function.

READING OF THE HOUSE REPORTS BEGUN (Text for house reports, see appendix)

Common observations in the house reports

- Formation is solid and with good personnel but it was also noted that formators should be encouraged as much as possible to participate in other formation programs such as MFP, ANANIE, BECAN (Benedictines Cistercians of Nigeria) and BECIAKU (Benedictines Cistercians Kenya Uganda).
- Silence, lectio Divina and tardiness for the little hours are still a challenge.
- The political situation of many countries where our monasteries are located is affecting the economy and means of support.
- Most of our monasteries are under the leadership of Superior Ad nutum.

NB at the end of every house report there were questions and answers. This exercise took almost three days, alternatively with other discussions as shown in the dates.

31th January 2019

This day Mother Philomena was the moderator, she begun by inviting the members to congratulate Dom John Bosco on his patron feast day and

thanking him for the work he does as president of RAFMA. She then invited Dom Armand Vielleux who gave a presentation

ON THE ROLE OF A SPIRITUAL FATHER IN A MONASTIC CONTEXT

(Text see appendix)

Quoting constitution 1, our monastic life finds its expression in the tradition and as superiors of cenobitic communities we need to find this tradition. He also mentioned the two ways of living the monastic charism (eremitic and cenobitic) life. In the desert one can find himself or lose himself and he said it is important to understand this in a cenobitic community; the role of a spiritual father is to help the disciples grow into the likeness of Christ.

He also explained this role of spiritual fatherhood basing on the Rule of Saint Benedict Chapter two. The Abbot has to exercise the responsibility of authority in the community first of all with those chosen to share in his authority and then with all the members. Therefore there must be a common identity and vision in sharing responsibility.

At the end of his presentation Dom Armand formulated two questions for group discussion.

1. What distinguishes a Cistercian community from any other monastic community?

BELLOW IS THE FEED BACK FROM THE GROUPS

They mentioned Hospitality, Charter of Charity (expressed in visitation), autonomous, one Chapter, simplicity (in liturgy, architecture, habit), universality, reasonable obedience, solitude and silence, balanced horarium, etc.

Dom Armand drew up three important values that are mainly particular to Cistercian life. In nutshell these are ***solitude, simplicity and obedience***

2. What are the values that we take into making a common decision?

Balance of life which affects the whole community. What brings about this equilibrium? It is the solitude that is essential to our monastic life. He mentioned that when one abides with the values of the community then he/she is obedient and when one does something which is not in conformity with the community then he/she is disobedient. He concluded by saying each time we make decisions we should take into account the visions and values of the community life.

1st February 2019

Evaluation of the General Chapter of 2017:

- A member was happy of how the issue of the Father Immediate was settled. In the end houses which had no father Immediate were given new fathers immediate at least up to the General Chapter of 2020.
- The climate of the General Chapter: the conferences were appreciated.
- There was good pastoral sharing and no time was wasted. The Adhoc met
- The young superior's contributions to the Chapter were very good and impressive
- The main issues were tackled especially that of fragility, the aging communities, and this helped to see the reality as it is.
 - Many communities were realistic about their situations.
- The Chapter was well organized in the aspects of it: the moderators, interpreters, the secretaries etc.
- There was fraternal atmosphere among the capitulants.

2nd February 2019

In the morning the superiors went into pastoral sharing.

Then in the afternoon **Dom Armand updated the members on the document issued by the Holy See: Vultum Quaerere Dei and Cor Orans**

4th February 2019

THE ABBOT GENERALS PRESENTATION ON THE PASTORAL MISSION OF THE ABBOT/ABBESS (*Doc. Text see appendix*)

He began by saying since I wasn't given a theme; this made me limited, because I always like to have a theme.

Nevertheless he started by quoting the Rule of St. Benedict chapter 2 and 64. Saint Benedict emphasizes that the Abbot should teach, but more so by example and should have no favourites. He should be accountable to God and should bring to conversion. Be a father not a president. He should listen to all, learned in law, prefer mercy to judgment. Aware of his weaknesses he should correct them, because a restless mind is a hazard for him because it takes away his peace. He should be discrete; this will help him to respond to the needs of all (basics of RB and constitution).

He also mentioned the document on the service of authority in consecrated life published in May 2008. In the general section, one in authority is called upon to pay attention to all, called to inspire courage in the midst of problems e.g. accept difficulties of the present situation especially in moments of fragility, should be present in critical situations but also recognizing their own weakness and limitations, called to keep alive the Charism, accompanying members on their on-going formation, paying attention to the growth of every person and allowing oneself to be changed in the process of helping others.

In the second section of the document, he mentioned that authority should promote the growth of the community. He said this document is making us aware of this aspect in the form of formation.

The last section of this document talks about human relationships.

In summary he said listening is an important aspect of a superior. Accepting each and every person unconditionally. He noted that one who does not know how to listen to his brother or sister does not know how to listen to God. He further explained listening is not time wasted. Being in the service of individuals is not an easy practice; it's a challenge for the person in authority. All one need is to balance and a sense of faith.

In the section on community discernment the Abbot General pointed out that different Orders, congregations have different structures but there is this section on discernment. Below are some points he put forward in the process of discernment

The community seeks the will of God.

Attention to the signs of the time, evangelization.

Freedom from prejudice that is, from one's own ideas.

The community is the best place to recognize God's will.

Fraternal obedience and mutual obedience.

True fraternal obedience is based on the relationship we have with each other.

There were some other questions that were raised and the Abbot General answered them instantly.

5th February 2019

Dom Armand gave some clarifications on the issue of his position as Father Immediate of Illah. He was answering the question; why is it that for the case

of Illah the Father Immediate is Dom Armand and not Scourmont (**bellow is the text of his answer**)

Delegation

Filiation is the most basic element of the structure of the Order, according to the CC.

Filiation is a relationship between two communities, not between individual persons.

Of course, filiation cannot be delegated, because it is not an office that a person can transfer to another person.

Filiation can be changed... only by the General Chapter.

The Role of the Father Immediate is something very special to our juridical structure.

It is a dimension of the role of the abbot.

When someone is elected abbot, he assume.....

He assumes a collegial pastoral responsibility on all the monasteries of the Order

And, if his community has daughter houses, he assumes a particular responsibility on the daughter houses of his community. This is part of his role as abbot; not something that is added to it

When someone is elected abbot of Bellefontaine, one aspect of his service as abbot of Bellefontaine is to be the Father Immediate of N.D. de l'Étoile and of Kokoubu...

To be Father Immediate of Kokoubu is not an office to which someone can be elected or appointed. It is part of the job of being abbot of Bellefontaine..

Therefore paternity cannot be delegated. What is delegated is the exercise of Paternity.

In our Constitution of 1990, the Superior *ad nutum* was not considered as a major superior but simply as a delegate of the Father Immediate. Then, we corrected that in 2002 (?) and the Superior *ad nutum* is a major superior with

full rights. Therefore, when someone is appointed superior ad nutum, he becomes the Father Immediate of all the daughter houses of his community.

What happened is that, at some points, some twenty years ago, we had a large number of Superior ad nutum and some of them were superior of large Abbeys with several daughter houses. It was therefore decided that when a Father Immediate appoints a Superior Ad nutum, he may advise him to delegate the exercise of his paternity to another superior.

We usually call that person “Father Immediate Delegate”. It would be more accurate to call him a delegate of the Father Immediate.

This does not change at all the relationship between the communities. It is a personal responsibility given to a person. If the abbot of Bellefontaine delegates the paternity on Kokoubu to the abbot of Acey, Bellefontaine remains the mother House of Kokoubu and the community of Acey is not implicated at all – except that his abbot would be more often absent.

What happens is that the abbot of Bellefontaine delegates another abbot to exercise his pastoral responsibility in his place over the community of Kokoubu.

Does someone need to be an acting abbot to be delegated as Father Immediate? No. We can take an example. To make the Regular Visitation is a part of the pastoral responsibility of the Father Immediate towards his foundations. Now, when we wrote the Statute on Regular Visitation, we established that not only the abbot of another community but also a retired abbot could be delegated to make a Visitation in place of the Father Immediate. Therefore, nothing prevents a Father Immediate to delegate a former abbot to exercise the service of Father Immediate on one of his daughter houses.

That principle was explicitly accepted at the last Chapter.

Now, let’s take my personal situation – not as an example but as a test case.

In 2009 the abbot of Maria Wald was advised by two Visitors to delegate his paternity over the nuns’ monastery of Mariafrieden. Dom Josef made that delegation to me.

The two following General Chapters (2011 and 2014) decided that such delegation should be continued till the following General Chapter. So, I served as Father Immediate of Mariafrieden from 2009 to 2017. It was a personal

task. The community of Scourmont was not involved at all, juridically. Scourmont had already enough daughter houses.

Something similar but slightly different happened with Illah.

The mother house of Illah, since its incorporation in the Order Has been Genesee. The Father Immediate, Dom John Denberger delegated me to make the Regular Visitation in 2012 – which I made with Mother Regina. His successor, Dom Gerard D’Zousa, delegated me also for the Regular Visitation in 2014. Again, I made it with Mother Regina.

During all those years, one of the concerns was that, especially since the election of Dom Gerard at Genesee, Illah was practically without a Father Immediate, because the health of the Abbot Genesee did not allow him to make this long trip. Dom Timothy and Mother Regina tried very hard to find a community that would accept to be the mother house...

So when we arrived at the last General Chapter, the situation was different, since there was the possibility in this situation as in a few other similar situations, for someone who was not an acting abbot to be delegated. Dom Gerard, wanted to delegate me. The commission on the Fathers Immediate has some other names. In the end the Commission proposed some names, including me and Dom Gerard sent me a letter, shortly after the General Chapter, delegating me as the Father Immediate of Illah.

The community of Scourmont has nothing to do with that. The community of Genesee remains the Mother House, but the abbot of Genesee has delegated to me, personally, and not to Scourmont, to exercise in his name the role of Father Immediate.

Therefore, when I made the Visitation at Illah, a few month later, I was not a delegated visitor. I made it as a delegated father Immediate exercising his full right and duty of making the Regular Visitation.

Scourmont and Illah

There is something more concerning the role of Scourmont.

When there was question of incorporating Illah in the Order, several houses were asked to be the Mother House. Mepkin was very interested but, for some reason could not do it. Scourmont was asked; but we already had seven daughter houses. We thought that it would be normal for Genesee to take it, since Genesee was already Father Immediate of Awhum. Dom John

Denberger, then abbot of Genesee, hesitated because Genesee already had other daughter houses that were a great burden on the economy of the community.

The solution that was found was that Genesee would accept to be mother house, but that Scourmont would assume all the economic aspect of the paternity. A convention was made between Genesee and Scourmont on how this would work. Therefore, Scourmont has been taking care of the financial and economic needs of Illah since the time of the incorporation of Illah into the Order. This is not something personal; it is a relationship between two communities, like the filiation. It continues under the new abbot of Scourmont. That has nothing to do with the fact that I – personally -- became, by delegation, the acting Father Immediate of Illah.

I hope this makes the situation a bit clearer.

Armand Veilleux,

PRESENTATION OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT BY MOTHER ANNA CHIARA

She began by giving an introduction about the beginnings of RAFMA fund for the new members and how it functions and the reasons why it was established. The money is deposited in the Vatican bank. Mother Daniele takes care of the necessary transactions.

A S O F 1ST J A N U A R Y 2017

DATES 2017	DEBIT	CREDIT	TOTALS
1 ST JAN 2017			29.230.63 \$
20 TH FEB 2017 contribution		2.839.32 \$	32.069.95 \$
1 st JULY profit		15.79 \$	32.085.74 \$
31 st Aug. Marist Exp.	6.186.00 \$	-	25.889.74 \$

4 th OCT. Profit		2.630 \$	28.529.74 \$
29 th Dec. balance From Marist. Exp Bank fee	22.00 \$	14.95 \$	28.544.69 \$ 28.522.69 \$
End of 2017			28.522.69 \$
2018			
29 TH JAN Contributions		3.327 \$	31.849.69 \$
1 st July profit		92.89 \$	31.942.58 \$
28 th Dec profit		112.24 \$	32.054.82 \$
Bank fee	22.00 \$	-	32.032.82 \$
Contribution 2019		3.090 \$	<u>35.122.82 \$</u>
NB The expenses	Of RAFMA Benin	Not yet deducted	

A WORD FROM MOTHER RACHEL

She began by saying that she has not prepared a speech but a sharing of her first impressions as a member of the Abbot General's council. She thanked the Abbot General for the warm welcome she received. She also thanked the region for inviting her especially at this meeting. She said that all were welcoming and very helpful especially Mother Regina who gave her good and encouraging words. She said in her few words that now she is beginning to feel at home,

after she attended a one month course for Italian language, she can follow the chapter conversations and the liturgy with less translation.

PRESENTATION OF A REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY OF FORMATION
(English speaking) Sr. Elizabeth **see text appendix**

6th February 2019

EVALUATION OF RAFMA MEETING 2019 BENIN

1. EVALUATION OF THE DELEGATES/EXPERIENCE (see doc appendix)

2. EVALUATION FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants appreciated the organization. The hospitality of the community and its welcoming attitude. The participants enjoyed the recreation presented and the evening supper they shared with the community of L'Etoile, and the good meals throughout. The liturgy was well presented

They appreciated the moderators of this meeting, the president and her assistant and their helpers, and the good cooperation among themselves. They mentioned there was no time wasted attributed to the good organization.

The spiritual presence of the Abbot General and Dom Armand gave color to the occasion together with the good conferences they presented and more so the intervention when clarification was needed.

The house reports showed the good work done in our monasteries and all challenges were brought to the floor. They noticed the good participation and this time round all monasteries were represented; one mentioned the need to create a commission to review these house reports.

They appreciated the hard work of the secretaries, the vigilance of the time keeper, the translators Br. Polycarp in collaboration with Dom John Bosco. One mentioned the simplicity of the superiors.

However it was also noted that the text handout should be given to help in quick translation and bridging the gap, it was observed that the time for pastoral sharing was not satisfactory. Superiors should acknowledge receipt of information on time.

It was also observed that if possible we celebrate the Feast of our founders in the meeting or in our monasteries not while on the journey. It was noted that sometimes we never come to conclusion and so some points remain scattered.

In the late morning of the 6th February the participants of RAFMA visited our monastery of Kokoubu, toured the monastery, prayed and had dinner with the community. The members introduced themselves and there was an exchange of questions. It was another experience of communion.

7th February 2019

ABBOT GENERAL GAVE A BRIEF EXPLANATION ABOUT “*Experientia*”

He began by telling a little story of an old monk like the Abbas’ in the desert. He said this program is very good for us. He explained how this program came to be realized in 2014 by the good will and hard work of Sr. Marie the Central Secretary for formation.

As a result a News Letter was formed, to offer what is happening in the Regions on formation. Sr. Marie’s intuition came in a form of question posed by a capitulant: ***how do we promote an integral formation?***

The answer lies in our communities. The community is a formative element. So *Experientia* is (a program of all generations). It is not for gaining knowledge but it is about returning to the sources of our Cistercian origin. It is to deepen the sense of Cistercian life in the brothers and sisters. And it is to encourage individual study and *Lectio Divina*.

In 2016 the central commission was interested in this project and suggested a person to take responsibility of this program. Fr. Michael Casey accepted and formulated a team. (See Experiantia group photo). He explained the program has 10 sections.

1. An introduction of the orientation of this program

Other chapters to give flavor to the program

Reflecting on one's experience and having commentaries of other members of the Order.

2. Journey so far
3. Desire (freed from desire)
4. Imago Dei: the human person made in God's image
5. Monastery as a school of love

Units 6 – 10

Generativity, Prayer, diminishment, energy of hope and Cistercian Tradition.

He concluded saying we hope this can be done in groups in community and with other members of the Order so that we can grow in self-knowledge. He encouraged participants to encourage their communities to participate in this program.

**PRESENTATION OF SECRETARY OF FORMATION (French speaking)
(See text appendix) FR. JUSTIN**

A REPORT ON THE PRE FOUNDATION BY FR. CHRYSOSTOM

The pre-foundation of Maromby is called Our Lady of Harmony located in the Seychelles Island in the Western Indian Ocean North of Madagascar. The community voted unanimously 18 yes and 1 no. We have visited the place three times and the bishop gave us an invitation. Since 2009 we sent there six brothers to put up structures and now three brothers are being prepared to join the six. They have learnt the language, culture and economy.

Question: Maromby was fragile at the conception of this pre-foundation, how do you see it now? He answered It is now 10 years ago and the community of Maromby is strong enough to support this foundation in terms of personnel.

Question: Is the environment conducive for monastic life? He answered It is located 6km away from the town, deep in the forest.

Question: What are the brothers doing to ensure their living? He answered; they are doing mixed farming, sweet potatoes are a real delicacy for the Islanders and they also sale milk from the livestock.

Question: Do these brothers have time for monastic pleasure with all these activities. He said yes and that is the reason why we are sending three young brothers to reduce the work load.

Question: What is the population of Seychelles in terms of percentages? He answered there are 85.000, 75% are Catholics.

QUESTIONS ON POSSIBLE VOTES

1. We recommend that the pre-foundation of Maromby be raised to the rank of foundation.

17 present

Yes	No	Abstention
14	1	2

The vote was accepted.

2. We recommend that the Priory of Abakaliki be raised to the rank of an Abbey.

Yes	No	Abstention
16	-	1

The vote was accepted unanimously.

3. We wish that the question of delegating the regular visitation every six years in the monastery of nuns be re-studied.

Yes	No	Abstention
11	5	1

The vote was accepted.

SOME IMPORTANT DATES

The next General chapter will begin on the 2nd of September 2020. And the next RAFMA meeting will begin on the 28th August and end on the 31st August 2020 at the Marist Brothers. Arrivals will be on the 27th of August 2020. Mother Rachel will take care of the arrangements; you are requested to communicate in time your travel arrangements.

CLOSURE

Before the closing the Abbot General was asked to share briefly about the beatification of the Martyrs of Algeria since he was present.

They were 19 Martyrs of whom 7 were our Cistercian monks of Tibhirine. The function was well organized as a fact that Algeria is a Muslim country. The minister of internal affairs was particularly welcoming and he took part in the celebration. He noted that in one of his Encyclicals Pope Francis mentions Blessed Maria Gabriella and at the end the Martyrs of Tibhirine as an example of communal sainthood.

The Abbot General continued that throughout their lives there was a sense of simplicity, he noted this when he visited the monastery. The structures are very simple and poor.

The president of the region concluded thanking the Abbot General, Dom Armand and Mother Rachel for their presence and spiritual input all applauded with clapping, He continued to thank Dom Armand Veilleux for his attachment to the African communities, lastly but not least thanked Mother Genevieve and the community of L'Etoile Notre Dame, the secretaries and delegates.

He declared the meeting closed at 4:07 pm Benin time on the 7th February 2019.

Sr. Elizabeth (Butende).

APPENDIX

HOUSE REPORTS **I**

1) Koutaba I..1

2) Mokoto I..2

3) Victoria I..3

4) Kasanza I..4

5) Maromby I..5

6) Bamenda I..6

7) Kokoubu I..7

8) Awhum I..8

9) Nsugbe I..9

10)Illah I..10

11)L'Etoile N.D I..11

12)Clarte' Dieu I..12

13)Butende I..13

14)Abakaliki I..14

15)Huambo I..15

16)Mvanda I..16

17)Ampibanjinana I..17

18)Kibungo I..18

SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD (DOM ARMAND) **II**

PASTORAL MISSION (ABBOT GENERAL) **III**

EVALUATION DELEGATES **IV**

REPORT OF SR. ELIZABETH **V**

ART OF WINNING SOULS (FR. JUSTIN) **VI**

HOUSE REPORT RAFMA 2019- KOUTABA.

Dear brothers and Sisters, following the pastoral decision of the last General Chapter in Assisi 2017, our lady of Koutaba is for more than one year now under the regime of the apostolic commissary. On his return from Europe, Fr. Etienne gave a report outlining the new status of our house. Dom Vedaste, Prior of our lady of Mokoto, as the delegated father Immediate, also read with keen attention the letter addressed to the community by the General Chapter. Once enlightened on the nature and outcome of this our new monastic evolution in the Church, we all took to waiting the appointment by the Holy See the Apostolic Commissioner in accordance with the fore mentioned situation. The said appointment was arrived at, towards the end of December, a few days before the New Year's feast. Once the New year was celebrated, Fr. Henri FOUA, whom we knew already so well as the former provincial superior of the Spiritan Missionaries for the Province of Cameroon and Gabon, as from early January came for his first pastoral visitation, that inaugurated a series of regular visits thereafter. This appointment came after his service as the provincial of his Congregation. Fr. Fouda, who cannot be resident in the community appointed a Claustral Prior, and this choice fell on Fr. Etienne. The new responsibility which he accepted to exercise after that of superior ad nutum has lasted for almost three years. The different encounters of Fr. Fouda with the community were punctuated by personal, group encounters (with the different internal commissions) and chapters. The later offers to brothers the different evolutions of our monastic life, the opportunity to put our efforts together since his taking up of service in view of accompanying the community towards the path of peace and reconciliation. This is remarkably manifested in all the Chapters held all along the year, as well as in the tone of speech, generally sincere in the interventions of one another.

The economic aspect, that happened at the priory, distant from the spiritual considerations is not left out, because upon his arrival in koutaba, Fr. Fouda, found-out that the brothers were carriers of a project which they particularly held utmost in their hearts namely: the improvement of the existing agro-pastoral activities in collaboration with the World bank and the Cameroon government better known by its French acronym as PRODEL (for the development of animal rearing). With the assistance of the Commission of Aid, we succeeded to raise the amount of money being part of our contribution, the finishing-touches of the financial document is on the right path. The last visit of Fr. Henri and the meeting with economic commission gave him the occasion to take-stock on this document and the state of our house accounts. It is also during his visit that he made known to us his annual report in accordance with the recommendations received from the Holy See. In March Fr. Dominic arrived from the monastery of Victoria and his presence is highly appreciated in the celebration of the Eucharist and in formation. Our gratitude goes to Dom John Bosco and the community of Victoria.

Br. Seraphim and Br. Felix are absent from the community due to health reasons. The first is in Douala, and the second is in France where he has joined Br. Martin-Joel. In the Month of September, Br Tchosse requested for the dispensation of his vows, the canonic procedure is on the course. Apart from this departure, the global face of the community remains the same. 14 solemnly professed, 2 simple professed, one novice and a postulant.

HOUSE REPORT, MONASTERY OUR LADY OF MOKOTO

Statistics at the expedition of this report									Since the last general chapter 2017				
P.S	P.T	Nov	Post	Total	m.A	Med.A	Abs	N.st	P.hab	P.T	P.S	Dec	Dep
25	7	4	3	39	42		7	1	3	3	1	1	N. 0 PT.0 PS.0

1. Community life. At the moment of the expedition of this report we are consternated by the death of Father DHELO JIMANI Mark, Prior from 1994-1998. May the land of ancestors be soft for him and may God grant his soul eternal rest. During our discussions we have realized that the community members are dynamic: in the prayer values, in manual work, and Lectio Divina. This is still to be improved by the presence of all. Some brothers should make more efforts to respect the limit of the cloister. Mutual respect in the services can foster fraternal life. The community has confidence in its members, but we should not deceive especially in the usage of means of communication.

2. Spiritual life. We have all the tools which favor spiritual life: Bible, books, offices, permanent formation and Eucharist as well as the monthly solitude day. Our liturgy is beautiful, full, mindful, and participative. We encourage each other to be active. Moreover, our Eucharistic celebrations are well animated. Personal prayer is rare. Finally the punctuality at the divine offices is necessary.

3. Formation. A good knowledge of the learning language helps in initial formation. Our library is well furnished. The novitiate and junior's program together with the practice of liturgy as well as permanent formation constitute a solid base for a blooming monastic life. The seminars have always been opportunities of growth and experience exchange with others. We also learn trough the multiple services rendered to the community and to one another. Thank you to the formators and the community which frames us.

4. Economy. Is our economy going to answer the needs of the increasing community? Till now our economy is good, but there must be scientific and honest management. Good economy, is a product and an effort of each member, in taking care of material, and avoids throwing things away, for this is the characteristic of an organized and under development! The management should concern all operational fields. Dialogue and discipline in working helps to spend less and gain much more. The study and the analyses of projects should be complete to allow its stability. The economy depends also with the circumstances. And so, the social economic and political situation of our country does not allow us to aim high. Our balance sheet is of 70%. The electricity remains a challenge to overcome.

5. Thanks giving. We thank the Lord for the wonders he accomplishes in our lives: jubilees of brothers, professions, and the friendly visitation of our new Father Immediate Dom Damien of Scourmont who called us upon to be friendly; the community retreat "*Model in us the characteristics of Christ*", preached by sister Martha Bernardine d'Esquerme, it was a favorable time to revise our history. We thank our mother house for the building of a new dormitory.

HOUSE REPORT OF VICTORIA ABBEY FOR THE RAFMA MEETING of 2019

Statistics: We have 17 solemnly professed Brothers of whom the following 6 are absent : Br. Martin Howard is in a nursing home in the Netherlands, Br. Daniel Oduor in Kenya (absent with permission), Br. Joseph in Our Mother House Tilburg, Fr. Dominic in Cameroon to help our brothers of Koutaba; And in formation, we have 14 brothers : 6 temporary professed (2 of the temporary professed are in the community of the mother house for further monastic experience and studies, 4 novices, 4 postulants and 1 aspirant with us. So in total we are 31 of whom 25 are present in the house.

Community Life: In general our community life is good despite some occasions of tensions that unfortunately happen once in a while because of differences of character, background and opinion. We are grateful to God that most of the brothers enjoy good physical health. The presence of many younger brothers in initial formation is a blessing to our community in many ways. However, as the community grows in number, also many challenges such as : lack of silence that often turns into murmuring and grumbling, late coming to the divine office and singing practice attributed in many cases to commitment to manual work and other activities. Also a brother or two are sometimes absent at the Divine office for no good reason.

We appreciate the help of our mother house and the Commission of AID for funding the on-going construction of our new Church, the novitiate, the gatehouse and the guest house. This will be a major input for a better organized community life and its various activities.

Liturgy: Our liturgy is well attended but the quality of singing still need improvement especially in harmonizing our voices. Little by little the brothers are appreciating songs in our local languages. The Mass hymns sang in different languages are an enrichment. And almost all the young brothers in formation are musically talented. But the big challenge is still lack of enough hymn books and musical instruments.

Formation: We have many vocations from all over our East African Countries. As we noted above in the statistics, we have 14 brothers in formation. The brothers involved in their formation give the best of themselves according to their capacities. But the formation of juniors is still a challenge due to lack qualified personnel.

The ongoing formation needs to be better organized. The absence of Father Dominic who was in charge of ongoing formation has weakened its regularity.

Economy : Our economy is still weak ; the cattle which is meant to be our main source of income in the future is growing but still cannot cater for all our needs. It's only with our other small projects like farming, piggery, outside help that we can make a living.

We thank the novices for their hard work and the brothers involved in the financial organization of the community.

HOUSE REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY OF EMMANUEL/KASANZA RAFMA 2019

Introduction

This short community report was written after the temporary publication of the presidential and legislative elections in our country (DRC) by the independent electoral national commission (CENI). The so-called result didn't correspond in general to the expectations of the population, and referring to the speech of the CENCO on the truth of the ballots and other organization. It has provoked riot in certain towns of the country giving way to loss of human lives and some important material damages mostly in the province of Kikwit which is 130 km away from Kasanza. It's now one year without internet; this is a big setback for our community. The Orange antenna recently installed at our monastery still remains unstable. It is thanks to our Trappistine sisters of Mvanda that we receive some news from the Order.

Community life and formation

At the time of writing this report, we are 16 brothers solemnly professed among them 5 are absent: 1 at the theological studies, he remains at the mother house in Westmalle. Four are doing university in Kinshasa; the former prior is doing the veterinary in medicine and the 3 others are following philosophy and theology. They are 3 young professed (one is doing the ISTIM and is at Westmalle), 6 novices and 4 postulants. The initial formation of our young is assured by 7 brothers solemnly professed, but the practice of the music is given by a lay and the two other brothers follow the seminar organized by our sisters of Mvanda. Since March of 2018, we have had the joy of welcoming our brother Mgr Marie-Edouard Mununu Kasiala after his retirement from the charge of Bishop of Kitwit. He has accepted to teach some subjects in music and other Cistercian fathers. The last year the community did not succeed to elect the Prior. Our Father Immediate Dom Nathanaël has appointed pastoral counsellors, composed of 5 brothers: Fr. Peter Musongo, Br. Peter Mayakahis assistant and responsible for the young professed and Father Léonard Novice Master. At the end of that period, Father Immediate appointed Fr. Peter Musongo, Superior Ad nutum who has continued to collaborate with the same Pastoral counsellors and a small group for the finance services.

Economy, Liturgy and Manualwork

The economy goes hand in hand with security and peace. The country is experiencing economic instability on many points and we are not exempted. The community survives from the donations of Westmalle and our cattle. We have revived the transport service with our big vehicle. The two first trips went on marvelously, but the third was unsuccessful because of an accident due to the bad condition of our roads. Thanks to God no body died. However, it has caused a lot of material damage and we still pay the debts. The brothers are also doing their best in agriculture, poultry, but they are less profitable. The opening of our Dispensary helps us a lot, mostly to cover the health care of our workers, some of our family members and ourselves. It also renders services to the insolvent villagers who are poverty stricken.

Concerning the liturgy: many brothers are absent at the little hours. The Sunday Mass in Kikongo (local language) is well animated by our young brothers.

At the end, our community assures you their humble prayers as it counts on yours.

HOUSE REPORT FOR MAROMBY 2019 RAFMA

Community

We are 42 monks, 26 are solemnly professed, 4 are temporary professed, 5 novices, 7 postulant. Since January 2018 father Jean Chrysostom has been elected Prior of Maromby. The atmosphere with him is wonderful; each brother has a good relation with him. The brothers live together without quarrelling; there are no competitions any more as it was before. The Opus Dei in general is good. Brothers are very much committed. But for others they need much effort to be present at vigils despite the manual hard work.

Young brothers of novitiate are living very well the Lectio Divina, but the juniors need more encouragement. Our monastery is visited by many people who come for retreat or for recollection. Last year the Monastery celebrated its 60th anniversary. For that purpose we invited the Archbishop to preach our retreat.

The work

Each brother does well his personal and community work. Actually we are changing the roof of our Church; but we are also preparing the construction of a new cave, because the grapes are expanding progressively each year. The Maromby wine is most popular all over Madagascar and many are coming to buy from the Monastery. Wine is our livelihood; we also have the rice plantation and small cattle and cassava plantation, sweet potatoes and an orchard.

Formation

Since the last general chapter, 6 brothers made their solemn professions and 2 made their temporary profession. Brother Timon has been ordained Priest. The formation house is ever full. We should construct 30 more rooms. Elder brothers give some courses to the postulants and novices.

One young professed left voluntarily the monastery. The community makes effort to teach French to the young brothers. There is also ongoing formation in the community. However, there is a need for a better organization for young professed. We continue the work of discernment in order to prepare the candidates who seem in general serious. We wish that the Prior may give more responsibilities to the brothers.

1. Foundation of the Monastery Our lady of Harmony

We wish to present at the general chapter 2020 our project of becoming foundation. This has been in preparation for 10 good years. 6 brothers are there present they will be joined by 3 more brothers.

2. The political situation

Madagascar is a rich country, but most of the Malagasy are still under poverty because of the political instability. We hope that with the new president the country shall see the more develop rapidly. He is the youngest of the African president. Many thanks indeed.

OUR LADY OF BAMENDA ABBEY HOUSE REPORT, RAFMA 2019

At the time of writing this report, Our Lady of Bamenda Abbey numbers thirty members with an average age of forty five, and of whom two are absent for various reasons.

The Socio-political crisis in Cameroon and specifically in the English speaking Regions where our monastery is located seems to be growing in intensity and in effects especially on the common man. It is becoming more and more very difficult to move from one area to another within the Regions with the numerous road blocks, and with constant ghost towns at times for three consecutive days in a week. The economic consequence on the Regions and the entire country as a whole is beginning to take its toll. During the elections last October we received and cared for quite an influx of persons for about two weeks. Our car also was seized by the Separatists, but thank God we recovered it from the Military after four months. Despite all this we have been blessed with a postulant receiving the novice's habit, the simple profession of one novice, and two brothers making final profession. We adopted a new horarium and our enclosure wall is under construction. We remain under the regime of a Pontifical Commissary.

As described by the Ratio, the spiritual principles that are to be followed in the process of Cistercian Monastic formation, especially during the initial stage are well followed by those concerned. As a school of the Lord's service, we are called to maintain and transmit the Cistercian Patrimony to those who join the monastery. Our novices and junior professed brothers also take part in seminars organized by the Conference of Religious of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. At present no brother is studying outside the community since those who were in school graduated. However, we receive a visiting professor who gives philosophy classes to the brothers weekly, and a diocesan priest who comes monthly for spiritual assistance and confessions. As fidelity to the demands of monastic conversion require, some form of ongoing formation is done by inviting some experts to give us conferences especially in the area of Human Formation. We have had two of such workshops during the year that has just ended, though it would appear we forget our lessons as soon as the teacher leaves. There is also noticeable laxity in lectio and late coming at the Divine Office by some members.

In January last year 2018 we had a very serious visitation by our Father Immediate, Dom Erik. He was delegated by Dom Timothy, our Pontifical Commissary to present to the community the letter written to the community by the last General Chapter of our Order. The visitor admonished the community to take its monastic life more seriously. This visitation saw two brothers given canonical warnings and the departure of three simple professed brothers, and one had to spend some few months at Awhum monastery to reconsider his vocation. We have been doing our best to implement the recommendations of this visitation.

The prevailing socio political crisis of our country is having an adverse effect on the economy of which the monastery is also very much affected. The purchasing power of people has dropped drastically as a great number of the population has taken refuge in the French speaking regions, some in hiding in forests and others in neighboring Nigeria. With the constant ghost towns and road blocks our products do not go to the market regularly again. This has brought a drop in our income and we are not finding it easy to foot our bills and to pay our workers. But by the grace of God we are surviving.

HOUSE REPORT OF OUR LADY OF KOKOUBU

RAFMA-JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019 AT L'ETOILE NOTRE DAME/ BENIN

Community—the community is composed of the following statistics: 14 solemnly professed and 1 from another monastery, 4 novices: One is in his second year of formation; 2 postulants. 5 Solemnly professed are absent: 2 are at the Mother House for reasons of old age and health, 1 at the Benedictine Abbey of Dzogbégan in Togo to refresh up. 2 are in exclaustation, but 1 asked to come back. Other young brothers who have done their experience should join the community this year if it is pleasing to God. May providence assist us that we may become a formative community in order to offer to the young all what they need for their formation to monastic life in an authentic way.

Formation —the young bothers are well cared for and receive from their novice master and other brothers, the proper basic teachings. These last moment the community did not have the permanent formation given by outside persons, because the two seminars: -on Cistercians Fathers and -on Self awareness had been postponed. Beside, the annual retreat was simple but rich with our monastic tradition: lectio divina, with the Liturgy have assured our formation.

Challenges—we had our regular visitation from 23 February to 05 March 2018. The visitor, Father immediate said among other things that: "In opening this visitation, I remind you what Benedict says from the prologue that we are living in the community under the guidance of the Gospel". (RB Pr. 21). I can prolong this citation, from Pope Francis: "The Gospel invites us first of all to respond to God who loves and saves us, to recognize him in others and coming out of ourselves to look for the good of all" (*The Joy of the Gospel, n° 39*). It is certain that each of you is full of good will, desires to live the Gospel message and to "look for the good of all". It is that evangelical vision which is incarnated in the love of the brothers and in the search of the good of all, we should pursue that vision".

This makes us aware of the challenges which we have to tackle. First of all there is a call to care for our relationship in view of performing our Liturgy; so that we may accomplish peacefully the Work of God. It goes likewise with our economic activities where there is a real need of collaborating for a good development. The vigilance that requires the use of NTIC is also another challenge for the personal silence and that of the community, on one hand, and that the postulants and novices are called upon to renounce the world, at the other hand.

Projects—we have many projects: renovation of the Guest house, the Church, construction of new houses to serve as infirmary, construction of a shop and a small cloister. All these were subjects of discussions in the community to be handed to experts for suggestions. We should start the work during this year if all is ready including the financial aspect of it. We thank in advance, all our habitual donors.

HOUSE REPORT OF A WHUM ABBEY TO RAFMA MEETING OF 2019 AT

L'ETOILE BENIN REPUBLIC

Introduction: From the last General Chapter the Abbey of Awhum has been restored from pontifical Commissary administration to assume a semi-autonomous authority structure, through our delegated Father Immediate, in the person of Dom Bernardo Bonowitz Abbot of Novo Mundo, Brazil. He was delegated by Abbot of Genesee – Awhum Abbey Mother House. Fr. Matthew Onuh was appointed as superior ad nutum.

Statistics of Membership: Numerically we are 72 Brothers:

- (i) Solemnly Professed are 68, Novices 3, Postulant 1; Mean Age 57, Average Age 56.
- (ii) We have 12 Priests among which 1 is a hermit, 1 chaplain to St. Justina Monastery Abakaliki, 2 are in Akokwa – Awhum Abbey pre-foundation, 8 Priests in the Abbey.
- (iii) Eight solemn professed Brothers stay at Akokwa _Awhum Abbey pre-foundation. Those in overseas are 2 and those on exclaustation 2.

However, 2 of our solemnly professed Brothers were dismissed and we lost 3 of our Brothers.

Liturgy and Spiritual Life: There is always an active and full participation of the Brothers at the Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist and Offices of the liturgy of the Hours. Little Hours too are not neglected except on occasions of ill-health, trips and essential duties, the life of enclosure, silence; prayer and work are highly valued and evident. With constant dialogue we strive to live in joyful peace and brotherhood for love of God. We have one hour weekly Blessed Sacrament adoration.

Formation: Our novitiate has been re-opened in 2017. We have 3 novices and a postulant who are being taken well care of by the novice master and his assistant. No brother is in the scholasticate (Juniorate). Philosophy courses are being run in our community for ongoing formation. Priests and other secular lecturers from major seminary and universities in and outside Enugu are well engaged in this. One of our brothers is studying Theology in a seminary. Four Brothers had already completed their courses in major Seminary. Also one of our priests got his doctorate degree in Pastoral Theology. The superior gives regular chapter talks to the Brothers.

Economy: The continuous depressing economic situation in Nigeria is affecting our economy too, but the community is working hard towards improving it.

Progress: Within the period for this report, 3 of our Brothers were ordained priests, and 6 were solemnly professed of which one was a diocesan priest. Through the aid of a benefactor, a new refectory/kitchen is under construction. Also our guest house has just been re-opened and some retreatants have started coming to share our life.

Our gratitude is to the Eternal Trinity, Father, son and Holy Spirit. Whose goodness endures both 'now and forever. Amen. **This report was read and adopted by the Community.**

NSUGBE HOUSE REPORT FOR RAFMA MEETING 2019

STATISTICS: The community of Our Lady of the Angels Cistercian Monastery, Nsugbe is made up thirty-two (32) Brothers. Of these thirty-two, twenty-two (22) are in solemn vows, five (5) in Simple vows, One (1) Novice and Four (4) postulants. Of the twenty-two (22) solemnly professed, one is in another monastery (Makoto).

DEPARTURES: The year 2018 saw the departure of three junior professed Brothers from our community. We pray that God will enable them to adapt themselves once again in the society, that they may find fulfillment in their lives.

REGULAR VISITATION: Our Father Immediate, Dom Clement Charbonneau made a canonical visitation to our community in the month of July 2018. He had the opportunity to witness the priestly ordination of our two brothers and the solemn profession of one of our brothers on 7th July.

LITURGY: The Liturgy, both the canonical hours and the Mass remains the central point of the life of our community. The active participatory role played by the Brothers in our liturgy is commendable. However, greater effort and commitment is still required for us to achieve the height of perfection which is our target.

FORMATION AND ON-GOING FORMATION: The Community's Formation Committee in collaboration with the Superior plays an active role in our formation program. The overall aim of our formation program remains the full integration and internalization of the Cistercian monastic values both for the young ones and the older members of the community. This is enhanced through the Superior's conferences, personal consultations and weekly conventual dialogues. Those under initial formation have classes and personal dialogues with their respective directors. We also employ the aid of a professional psychologist in our discernment/assessment of vocations.

As part of our on-going formation, we have employed the services of lecturers in the area of Philosophy and Theology courses for the community. Occasionally too, we invite some experts to deliver lectures/conference to the entire community. One of us presently is part of the program of BECAN Institute of Formation opened last year.

ECONOMY: By the grace of God, the establishments we have in our community, namely, Candle making industry, the gift-shop, Guesthouse, Poultry and Farm together with Mass Stipends and Donations, continue to sustain us economically. Our herbal drug department and Pineapple juice drinks are still on an experimental basis.

CHALLENGES: The monastic life itself continues to challenge us to a greater fidelity to the values that are part and parcel of our calling such as attendance to the office of Vigils, greater appreciation of the value of silence, fidelity to Lectio Divina and good relationship among the brothers.

GRATITUDE: Our community remains indebted to the Commission of Aid for its assistance which has enabled us to build a new guesthouse. We are also grateful to God for his blessings to us in the ordination of our two brothers to the priesthood and for the solemn profession of one of our brothers. We equally thank God for the good relationship which has existed between us and our Archbishop and also with the villagers. We still solicit for your continual prayers.

Prepared by the Superior and Community

HOLY CROSS CISTERCIAN MONASTERY ILLAH HOUSE REPORT OF 2019

PREAMBLE: The following house report of the above named monastery was prepared by a committee of three brothers with the help of our most recent visitation card of May 2nd to 11, 2018. It was read, corrected and approved by the conventuals. Our community is currently under the pastoral care of Dom Ogechukwu Ibe, who is Superior Ad nutum.

Cistercian Charism: The positive elements of Cistercian Charism present in our community include the vibrant celebration of the Divine Office with reasonable good attendance; most of the brothers are dedicated to various services. We have a very dedicated superior who pastorally cares for everyone and manifests significant good example of faithful monastic life. However, some of us are called to conversion with respect to humility and obedience, community unity, lectio divina and silence.

Contemplation: We observe prayer of the heart daily; after vigil for thirty minutes and after Vespers for ten minutes; considering the time after supper as a time for recollection. Monthly desert day also helps us to recollect. The main factors that distract us include the work load and much concern with guests. We manage our workload through monthly desert day of recollection and as a day when only necessary work is done. We brought our concern for guests to the attention of our regular visitors who admonished brothers from mingling with guests without special mandate from the superior. Brothers were also cautioned from going to the guest house after compline and were told to meet with the guests in the parlor and not in their rooms. These recommendations are yet to be met satisfactorily.

Formation: The concrete goal of formation in our community is to enable those under formation to assimilate the values of the Cistercian life. The Novice Master meets with each novice and postulant individually every week for about forty five minutes and has three classes with the group as a whole weekly. The Junior Director holds conferences with the juniors four times a week and in recent times has been reduced to three times a week and consultations once a while. Father Prior is always available to meet individual brothers' needs. In relation to ongoing formation we have been helped by Father Priors' conferences, homilies, counseling and availability to the brothers, conference of a psychologist in the area of mid-life transition. The Benedictines and Cistercian associations of Nigeria (BECAN) organized one month workshop which was helpful not only for the formators and community delegate, but also to the whole community and are gradually transmitting the benefits to those in formation.

Developments: There were some significant developments in our community since the last General Chapter and RAFMA meeting 2017. Dom Armand Veilleux and community of Scourmont Abbey Belgium raised a beautiful structure of twelve rooms, and they continue to support our community financially. These are part of the continuous contagious care Dom Armand Veilleux and the community of Scourmont has continued to give our community to the current Abbot of the Abbey. We remain grateful to them. We also built roofed connections from our church to the dormitory and from the dormitory to the refectory and also from the church to the novitiate. All thanks to God and the resounding initiative of our Prior. One of the brothers was ordained a priest on 14th July 2018 and another made his solemn monastic profession on the same day. May God be praised.

Visitation: At our most recent visitation, in May 2nd to 11th 2018, the delegated Father Immediate, Dom Armand of Scourmont accompanied by Mother Regina Nebo mentioned both the strength and weaknesses our community. They observed to

mention but a few, that we should accept Cistercian way of monastic life, appreciate the central management of community services, such as work which should not be seen as personal business, keeping the rule and unity with the superior.

STATISTICS AT THE TIME OF THE REPORT SINCE THE LAST GENERAL CHAPTER 2017

SOL PROF	TEMP PROF	NOV	POST	TOTAL	AVE AGE	MED AGE	ABS.	NON STAB	REC. HABIT	TEMP PROF	SOL PROF	DEATH	DEP ART
23	3	4	2	32	43.97	45	10	-	1	-	1	-	1

HOUSE REPORT L'ETOILE NOTRE DAME RAFMA 2019

Evolution of Community Life. We have lived in 2018 distressing moments: the sudden death of Sister Helen one of the first African sisters on 29th April and on 3rd November Mother Monica passed away, she was one of the foundresses and the first Abbess of our community. Since several months she was weakening, we had to keep watch every day and night. Spiritually she is still with us.

Presently, we are 44 sisters: 37 solemn professed, 4 Temporal professed, 2 novices and 1 postulant. On 30th June, Sister Marcelline Marie made her solemn profession, 9 professed are absent for various reasons: health, formation and one is at the generalate, one is helping a Benedictine community. Sister Yvonne of the Clarté-Dieu is with us. On 28 October, Dom Jean Marc, Abbot of Bellefontaine and our Father immediate came for the regular visitation, during which he had acquaintance with our community living. He found a real atmosphere of charity which has still to improve! It is important to renounce delicate attitudes, hurtful words or less respectful, coming late for the chapters and at the offices without special permissions. Father immediate brought our attention on several points:

- Lack of attention and collaboration when sisters are working together, the way of talking (very loud), and those in charge make more values on their charges. A qualified person could help us in this field of relation.
- Lack of availability for common work, lack of organization to simplify work. We had some exchanges on the topic to see how we can handle it. One in charge of work could organize and coordinate the productive activities and the community work. At L'Etoile, the work is heavy and it tends to impinge on other monastic activities.

An expert accountant will show us how to manage our works in view of the profitability of our products and a reliable account result. It supposes that we should rethink certain ways of activities and ask ourselves: "Is what we have been doing for a longtime still valid today"? Should I accept to use the modern means of communication?

Formation. Last year we had 2 seminars: the first, on voice production with Madame Pacquetteau. -the second, was about self-knowledge with Father Bruno SMA. The novices benefited from a special seminar on self-knowledge with Father Raymond GOUDJQ. The annual retreat was preached by the Abbot of St Benoît-sur-Loire (France).

The formation of young is assured by the community.

Chaplain. The community benefits from the permanent service of a monk from our Order. He is appreciated for his loyalty, his commitment and his discretion. A part from the daily Eucharistic celebration, he is contributing in initial formation.

Repairing of building. At the entrance of the monastery two ancient buildings have been repaired. A small oratory at a certain distance has been constructed. The guest house for family members has been renovated altogether. We thank the Order and all who have helped in realizing these works. We have two days in a month for the "rupture of the rhythm". It will be necessary in those days to avoid noise for those who have need to rest or to pray.

This report was done by the community after a team work.

N°36 ABBEY OUR LADY of CLARTE-DIEUMURHESA-DRCHOUSE REPORT for RAFMA 2019

First of all, receive our best wishes for the New Year 2019. At the moment of writing this report, we are twenty four members: seventeen solemnly professed among which three are absent three juniors, three novices and one postulant. There are three candidates for three months. Since the last regional meeting, various events have marked our community: two temporal professions, three have taken the habit, the change of stability by Sister Estelle, the coming back of Sister Josephine after a long stay at la Joie-Notre-Dame Campénéac in France. We had the joy of the regular visitation of our new Father Immediate, Dom Damien.

However, an event has affected us: the death of our sister and foundress Isabelle Régnier- may she rest in peace! We would like to share with you the situation of our Monastery: where are we? Where do we want to go? To start with, our current living is characterized by a constant tension towards the unity around our Mother Abbess. She is well devoted to the community and attentive to the growth of each one of the sisters. She knows how to create the atmosphere of family, feast and forgiveness, in a serene dialogue. Through her examples and teachings she helps us to preserve and to respect our monastic values. We put a particular emphasis on liturgy, Lectio Divina, oration, solitude and silence; work, common life.

Concerning the liturgy, it is lively, prayerful, prepared with care, appreciated by the community members and our guests. We make efforts in performing the prayers and in the Eucharist participation. However, we still have to make progress; for some of us, in punctuality at prayer and at the preparation of the functions.

The lection Divina is done in common two days per week. The other days each sister does it personally at a suitable time; for most of us, it's after vigils. In general, all the sisters are faithful to it and to the oration. Concerning common life, it enrolls in a peaceful solitude and silent framework. We exercise ourselves to speak with a moderate voice when necessary. Each sister is asked to walk with the community. In our relationships, we work for truthfulness and to avoid talking about an absent Sister.

Beside, formation passes through the chapters of the Mother Abbess, the readings, the preaching of our Father Chaplain; retreats, seminars and conferences of outsiders and the sharing of the works of Sisters. For the young in formation, the courses are done by Mother Abbess, by the Novice Mistress, Father Chaplain and some Sisters of the Community .We take this opportunity to thank the AIM for the seminar organized for the young professed of our region, at Kibungo in 2018.

Furthermore, for our economy, we are preoccupied in finding a profitable and stable work which might involve the community. For that, we are trying a diversity of activities in hope that one could emerge. Considering the situation of our country: unemployment, insignificant salary, each one tries to do a small business in order to survive. This aspect does not allow us to sell our products because of the competition of the wider market which causes the irregularity of customers, and the slowdown in selling our products. We are privileged to participate in some common works: dishwashing, laundry, household etc.

Finally we want to say few words about our relation with the local Church. They are good. The Archbishop visits us more often whenever possible, and when he comes to visit our Chaplain who is a diocesan priest. Likewise with the neighboring communities, we try to share as much as we can the joys and sorrows.

HOUSE REPORT OUR LADY OF PRAISE ABBEY BUTENDE MONASTERY 2019

At present the community is composed of 26 members. 21 solemnly professed, 4 temporally professed and 1 novice. One member is in exclaustation, 2 are for a 9 months spiritual renewal course at Namuggongo Kampala and one in a nursing home in the Netherlands.

This house report was composed by the community based on the house report of 2017, the recent visitation card of 2018 and the community lived experience.

We are called up on to greater unity which is expressed in our day to day living, by being open to each other, accepting and tolerating one another's personality in mutual forgiveness and trying to work together to build the community as the school of Christ. Nevertheless, some members do not relate freely with the Abbess and this fosters disobedience at times and there also happen to be groups, which may end in argument that may affect important decision making.

Our liturgy is good and prayerful but we need to polish our voices and improve the local songs by calling in experts in this area which will enhance more our liturgy. St Augustine says one who sings well prays twice. However, we are also invited to improve on the general responses in the liturgy.

On-going formation; we had the spiritual benefit to have our annual retreat and we still need more spiritual in puts. For the initial formation we are privileged to have capable formators and we are blessed with vocations. Our sisters in the novitiate last year attended together with their Mistress, a workshop organized by BECIAKU (Benedictine, Cistercian Kenya Uganda).

We enjoy solitude and silence which attracts other people who admire the quiet prayerful atmosphere. On the other hand sometimes, we fall short in preserving this treasure of our monastic tradition.

The general view of our economy is very weak, and we need to sort out the projects that will be of great support to the community.

We appreciate the paternal and maternal encouragement of our Father immediate and Mother Julian of the founding house especially during the recent visitation.

In summary, we are called upon to foster unity, community dialogues and meetings, focus on major projects, and modernize the system of book-keeping, promote functional committees, and so encourage each other to grow in holiness and wholeness.

ST JUSTINA CISTERCIAN MONASTERY ABAKALIKI HOUSE REPORT, 2019

STATISTICS: The community comprises of 43 sisters; 33 solemnly professed, 3 simple professed, 6 novices and 1 postulant. Thanks to the Lord for blessing us with many vocations. We experienced the death of a great figure our co-founder and the first superior in the person of Mother Margaret Mary Ezzinne Hanron, on the first day of June, 2018. We loved her, but God loves her more. She is a mother to all; may her soul rest in peace in the bosom of the Lord. Amen.

LIFE IN THE COMMUNITY: First of all, we are grateful to God for the successful election of a new superior in the person of Mother Regina Nebo, which took place in the month of April last year; and we pray that the Lord will continue to sustain us. We are a warm community in the sense that we share one another's joys and sorrows. There is a sense of maturity in our community, more now than before. Last year, three of our sisters underwent major surgery. Thanks to God for their quick recovery. Malaria and typhoid are two sicknesses that impose a challenge on our health condition. With regards to silence, we are trying but still lag behind in this area we are reflecting on the inordinate use of phones by some of our sisters.

LITURGY: Our liturgy has improved. We use our local instruments to enhance our singing. Our community sometimes invites someone from the parish choir to help us. We have tried to simplify our liturgy as Cistercian. Notwithstanding the progress which has been made in the developing of our liturgy, we still need an improvement on punctuality.

FORMATION: We are grateful to God for blessing us with many vocations. The Junior and Novice Mistresses, together with some sisters, give classes to those in initial formation. The constant changes of the novice and junior mistresses have greatly affected those in initial formation. Experts from outside are occasionally invited to help our on-going formation.

ECONOMY: Our main source of income remains the production of altar bread, though we earn a little income from the other departments, such as the guest house, proceeds from our farm, fruits from the orchards etc. We anticipate and believe that when the poultry project is begun, it will be a very good source of income to us. The instability of the economy of our country also affects us drastically. We help the poor around us from our little resources.

CHALLENGES: The structure of our monastery does not give us a good enclosure. Arrangements are being made to stop workers from encroaching inside the community. We are still struggling to keep our rule of silence. We have our *Lectio Divina* after the office of Vigils, though we can still find some members who lack in this area. We are a very hard working and the sisters are responsible to their duties, but sometimes some sisters take work as their priority and exempt themselves from prayer; while others over work themselves, get tired and fall asleep during prayer and *Lectio Divina*.

STRENGTH: Our hospitality to visitors is very much appreciated by all who come to experience our life. A lot of renovation has taken place in our community in the past few months such as the chaplaincy, reception block and refectory.

Last of all, we are requesting that we become an Abbey, and we look forward for its approval by the General Chapter, if it is in accord with the will of God. The Lord alone is our strength. Thanks to Him who sustains us.

HOUSE REPORT OF NASOMA Y OMBEMBWA –SOKE- ANGOLA

Officially the community is formed by 20 sisters : 16 solemnly professed, among them 1 is from Valseserena foundress house, 2 junior professed and 2 novices, but only 13 Sisters and 1 postulant are present in the community. Actually there are 10 Sisters who are absent of the community: 2 for health reasons (Sister Paula and Sister Fatima). Sister Adelaide is helping on the foundation of Valseserena in Syria, Sister Isabel is at the mother house, Valseserena and shortly she will be back to the community. Three other sisters who are absent are in other OCSO monasteries (Armentieres, Syria and Italy) under the responsibility of the major priors. In the community we are living in a serene atmosphere with simple and truthful relationships. Last year 2018 has been a tiresome and very important for the reception of an Italian group of volunteers from the Italian Enterprise which has built the remaining part of the monastery mainly, the Church.

Now we are glad to live in a beautiful and functional monastery with a Church which in three months shall welcome us, when the volunteers shall come for the last finishing.

Our work in the Pharmaceutical laboratory is well organized and allows us an autonomous economy for the ordinary spending. We also have a big land, thousand hectares, which nevertheless, has given us a lot of trouble for many years, because, after having done the access road, the population has taken a big part of the land to cultivate, also the deforestation of a big area of trees, which we have saved. Presently, after various meetings, it seems that we have achieved an agreement and we have built fences of the narrow area, leaving to the population a part for its substances.

At the farm, besides cultivating, we have various animals which help us as food and sale. Being small in number, we notice more tiredness and overloading of work, which affects the monastic balance. We try to dialogue on this aspect, that we might help each other. We are always praying that God may send more serious and persevering vocations. We hope that the Good Lord will listen to our prayers. Last year we got into the provisional houses before entering the new monastery. The Redemptorist nuns who came from Burkina Faso were waiting the realization of their proper monastery. It has been a rich experience and a positive fraternity more so in prayer. Our liturgy is simple and carefully prepared and we are eager to enter in our new church to praise the Lord in a more suitable place than the present small room. Since more than a year we have a chaplain from the Congregation of the Holy Spirit and we are thankful to the Lord, although our desire remains that it should be a monk who renders that service. The courses of our young sisters in formation are delivered by the community and 2 external professors who come temporary for an intensive time, because of the distance. We are an isolated community geographically and linguistically.

A month ago, we have a new Bishop, young and well prepared. He maintains the good relationships with the Diocese and the religious movements. More often they come for retreats on our lovely mountain.

HOUSE REPORT OF MVANDA MONASTERY FOR RAFMA 2019

The community of ND of MVANDA is constituted of 10 solemn professed, of which one is in Italy for health reasons and one is not permanent, from the community of l'Étoile-Notre Dame in Benin, 3 temporal professed, 4 novices and 4 postulants.

SOCIAL CONTEXT: At the moment of writing this report, the political situation of the country is very fluid and worrying in a disturbed electoral atmosphere. At the moment of the RAFMA meeting we shall probably be able to give more details.

COMMUNITY LIFE: Concerning our community life, several events happened during the last year and this has contributed to weld the community relationship. The community rejoiced when two postulants became novices; a change of stability from Vitorchiano community to Mvanda community, for one jubilee of 25 years and the golden jubilee of our elder sister Marie Rose in an atmosphere of grace and feast.

In February 2018 a diocesan priest of Bukavu asked to stay here for one year because of the insecure political situation in the Eastern of Congo and with the permission of his Bishop we received him as our chaplain. From 7th to 12th of march 2018 we had our regular visitation from our Father Immediate, Dom Nathanaël of Westmalle, he confirmed us in our search for conversion and recommended us once more to be vigilant on silence and on the separation from the world, as well as on the collaboration and the respect among sisters. Sister Elizabeth, novice mistress has attended three months' French program for formators. Mid-March, we started a construction which will draw a clear limitation of the enclosure, as the Visitation recommended.

LITURGY: Our offices are again being enriched by new songs and hymns that enrich our prayer of praise. The participation of all the sisters in the offices is constant and at Vigils almost all the sisters are present. As always we should be vigilant on the punctuality especially at the prayer of Sext.

FORMATION: At the level of initial formation, we have had during two years four seminars for the novices, postulants and aspirants. This seminar was opened to those in formation in the neighboring congregations. The participants were around 90 persons. Concerning the continual formation of the community we have organized four others seminars at the level of university for a period of 10 days in a year, on the model of STIM French, open to other participants such as the Benedictines of Mambré (DRC) and our brothers of Kasanza. Among the subjects there are: Holy Scriptures –Pentateuch and New Testament- , Social Doctrine of the Church, Bioethics, Christian Anthropology, etc.; which we appreciated. The week preceding the Advent we had our community retreat preached by a Jesuit Father and the theme was: *Fraternity*, which we appreciated very much.

WORK: The work remains for us an important challenge which is not yet resolved up to now. The heavy situation of the country at the level of economy, society, administration does not allow us to develop a kind of work which could sustain the livelihood of the community. However, we continue to maintain our field and our barnyard, which allows us to consume its product. We have created a small laboratory for the manufacture of pomades, creams, soap and tisane to propose for sale in the town of Kikwit and elsewhere. Those spaces of work engage our young sisters in activities which demand responsibility, collaboration and that is important for their growth and maturity. Thanks to the generosity of our Order, the commission of Aid and our mother house Westmalle, it is them that we can live.

In conclusion, we know that the Lord has made us walk during this period towards a great awareness of our monastic vocation in a country with multiple challenges: religious, social and security. In working for the formation of our conscious, in organizing seminars and formative encounters, we realize that we cannot keep this richness for ourselves. It becomes

natural and good for us to share with other ecclesial realities of the Diocese all this spiritual patrimony given to us. We take this opportunity to thank the AIM which enables this formative project.

Our Lady of Kibungo 69*

HOUSE REPORT for the RAFMA 2019 At l'Etoile Notre Dame

The community of Our Lady of Kibungo continues its spiritual journey with commitment on the road of faith following Christ.

All together each one in particular, is doing her level best to listen to the voice of the Lord who calls and invites us in various ways.

It is in that spirit that we have lived the death of our Sister Margerite Marie, one of our elders in the beginning of 2018; and all the events, joyful or sad, which has strewn this period which separates us from the last regional meeting.

Our fundamental preoccupation remains that of formation: on the permanent level as well as that given to the young, in monastic life.

This one is a great challenge for us and it requires from us a particular care more so concerning discernment.

Concerning economy each sister gives the best of herself in the service which is given to her. The use of mixed farming, the making of the hosts, helps us to cover our expenses and in helping the poor who knock at our door.

Our relation with the local Church is good. The daily Eucharistic celebration is assured by a diocesan priest. We ask the prayers of the region for our diocese which is once more without a shepherd, our Bishop; Mgr. Antony Kambanda has been nominated Archbishop of Kigali.

A spirit of charity reigns in the community; this is more visible at the moment of sorrows.

We thank all those who help us to move ahead on our journey.

Spiritual fatherhood-1

Surprisingly enough, there are very few publications on spiritual fatherhood or motherhood. If you make a research in the most well known theological or spiritual dictionaries in most of the modern languages (Dict. de la spiri. / Dizionario degli Ist. di perf./ Lexicon für Th und K.) You will realize with surprise that no one of them has a proper article on the subject. Most of them simply refer to "spiritual direction", as if it were the same thing. Then, of course, everyone thinks about the beautiful book by Father Irénée Hausherr "La direction spirit... en Orient autrefois", which is a most beautiful book. But its title is very ambiguous. In fact it speaks mostly of the relationship between master and disciple in the desert. In reality, "spiritual fatherhood" and "spiritual direction" are two things quite different. The documentation on spiritual direction is abundant but one-sided.

When one speaks of spiritual fatherhood, in Christianity, one must always return to Jesus' statement: "Do not call anyone on earth your "father", because you have only one father who is in heaven" (Matt. 23:9). Apart from the heavenly father from whom (according to Eph 3:15) comes every fatherhood in heaven and on earth draws its name, there is no father. Therefore, anyone who is called "father" in Christianity, cannot be father except because he embodies or manifests in one way or another God's unique fatherhood towards everyone.

This reality is so basic that it is easily forgotten in contemporary literature on the matter. If anyone ever incarnated in his life that fatherhood of God, it was certainly Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of the Father. We see in the Gospel that the type of relationship he established with those whom he called and who followed him is generally described in terms of a relationship between a master and disciples. It is the same type of relationship that was found in contemporary ascetic currents, like the one Jesus assumed when he was baptized.

Never does Jesus let himself be called "father", and he never claims that title. In the NT, the title "father" is never attributed to a human being in the context of a spiritual relationship. Of course there are two texts from s. Paul in which he comes close to attribute to himself that title. It is good to examine those two texts, because they tell us much about the meaning of spiritual fatherhood.

The first text is the one in which Paul, speaking to the Corinthians, calls them his "beloved children" and where he explains this way of speaking saying: "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I begot you in Christ Jesus through the gospel. » (1 Co 4:15) In the same way he writes to the Thessalonians that « as a father does for his children », he has been exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of them as a father » (1 Thess. 2:11).

If someone is a spiritual father, it is, therefore, not because he begets spiritual sons for himself, but because he bets his brothers in Christ, or to say it in a different way, he begets Christ in them. (... if someone.... *cloning*).

During the first Christian generations, the bishops are the first to receive the title of father. Their fatherhood is... through the preaching of the Word of God.

After the generation of the Apostles: formation (of catechumens... and in general)... in Schools... which we find especially in Judeo-Christian churches... (Where by the way we find monasticism). The most famous is that of Alexandria. Pantenos, Clement, Origen.

In those schools the master exercised a real spiritual fatherhood, leaving a common life centered on the Word of God. Not only the intellectual form; but the whole person. And especially the moral formation. If moments of openness of

the heart were possible, the spiritual fatherhood was exercised towards the community as such, through a common teaching.

Cf. Christ. He invites each one individually. But once someone has joined the group of disciples he is not formed through individual counseling or through moments of spiritual direction, but through a common teaching.

A new situation will develop in the deserts of Egypt.

(General picture of early monasticism)

Life in the desert is dangerous... One seeks a spiritual guide, an Abba

No one establishes himself a spiritual father. The disciples make the Abba.

To the Abba people ask: "Give us a word".

Transposition of the School of Alexandria to the desert.

Then individual disciples begin to live under the spiritual guidance of a father (cf. Hinduism). Personal experience.

Then something new develops: that depends on the old Egyptian culture and on tradition ways of forming in old Egypt. A relationship of father to son (not only of master to disciple). One lives with his father, adopts his ways of doing things, renounce his own will. Blind obedience. Pedagogical type of obedience. Temporary relationship... (It would be absurd to maintain it for life).

Let's sum up:

Spiritual fatherhood/motherhood in the Rule of St. Benedict

Spiritual fatherhood is present throughout the rule of S. Benedict. However, in order to perceive it, one has to seek for spiritual fatherhood in the line of how it was understood in the NT and in the primitive coenobitic tradition, and not in the line of something corresponding to the modern notion of "spiritual direction".

Benedict stresses first of all the fatherhood of God. Then he shows that it is expressed in the life of the community, in particular in the abbatial service, but also through the ministry of the various collaborators of the abbot and even in the mutual obedience that monks are invited to show to one another.

The whole Prologue of the Rule speaks of God's fatherhood. Benedict asks his disciple to welcome the advice of a loving father (*admonitionem pii patris*) and he states that his Rule is addressed to whoever wants to return to God through the labor of obedience after drifting away from Him through the sloth of disobedience, so that this loving father (*pius pater*) will not have to become an angry father (*irratu pater*) who will disinherit him. The Lord, indeed, being a loving father, wants to teach us the fear of God (*Venite, filii, audite me; timorem Domini docebo vos*) and to show us the way to life.

Immediately after that Prologue comes Chapter 1, about the categories of monks, in which we find the definition of a "cenobite" (which I mentioned yesterday morning)...."

It is only after he has established that general picture that Benedict speaks of the exercise of the spiritual fatherhood within the community. And, obviously, he speaks first of all, of the mission that the Abbot has to incarnate and exercise the fatherhood of God towards his brothers. It is, indeed, why he is called "*Abba*". "The Abbot must always remember what his title (*Abbas*) signifies. This title is given him because, in a vision of faith, monks really believe (*creditur*) that he is the representative – or vicar – of Christ in the monastery (*Christi enimagere vices*). Does not the Apostle say: "*You have received the spirit of adoption of sons by which we exclaim; Abba, father*" (Rom. 8:15).

What consequences does Benedict draw from this? – First of all that the abbot must *teach* – what is the traditionally the role *par excellence* of the spiritual father. He must teach the commandments of the Lord both through his words and his example and, obviously, not to teach anything that would not conform to the precepts of the Lord. On the Day of Judgment he will, indeed, be held responsible for his doctrine and for the obedience of his brothers. If the abbot is a shepherd of lambs, God is the *paterfamilias*.

He must incarnate the love of the Father and of Christ for all, showing the same affection to all his brothers. He must make Christ alive in them, i.e. Lead them gradually to a more perfect conformity to the image of Christ, including through advice, exhortation and, if needed, through correction of their faults.

Benedict will return to those basic ideas again in chapter 64, where he will add an important dimension: If a community elects an unworthy Abbot, the bishop and ... the faithful of the area must correct the situation... The monastic charism does not belong to the monks... People of God... Those who presently live monastic life are the guardians of the charism. They don't own it.

The next chapter is the one about summoning the brothers for counsel. This is because God exercises his fatherhood over the community by revealing to all the brothers, including the youngest ones, what he expects from the community. Nobody in the monastery, not even the Abbot, must be doing his own will, but rather the will of the heavenly father.

Then, after the chapter on the instruments of the good works, comes very naturally, the one on *obedience*, in which the monk is invited to imitate Christ who did not come to do his will but that of the *Father* who has sent him (Omnipresence of the Father).

The abbot shares with several persons the exercise of his fatherhood, whether it is through a responsibility that is explicitly spiritual, or one that is material. In reality no task is only material. All must be able to give a good work... condition... Deans (c. 21) who must be chosen "for [their] virtuous living and wise *teaching*" ... and the "*sempectae*" (c. 27) for special situations... also chosen for their wisdom (*seniores sapientes*).

That fatherhood is extended to material things (as in Pachomius). The abbot shares his responsibility with the cellarer who is not simply an administrator but someone who shares in the exercise of the fatherhood of the Abbot. He must, says Benedict, be like a father to the whole community (*omni congregationi sicut pater*). (c. 31). Then, there is the infirmarian (c. 36), who must serve the brothers like Christ.

And, of course there is... the novice master, that is an elder capable of winning soul and who should watch over the novices with a fatherly solicitude. Then, the prior... but...

That picture of the exercise of spiritual fatherhood in the community would not be complete without the two beautiful chapters on mutual obedience and good zeal (71 and 72), through which the brethren not only show each other brotherly feelings, but really exercise towards each other God's fatherhood.

Conclusion:

It is clear that Benedict is rooted in the great Christian tradition.

For him, God is the father of all and Christ is the Abbot of the community.

Spiritual fatherhood, that is, the expression and manifestation of God's fatherhood is exercised in the community through the community life itself, through a Rule that actualizes for that community God's will, as through the mediation of the Abbot and all who share his task and all the services in the community, be they spiritual or material.

What about spiritual direction? ... Should monks meet their Abbot regularly for spiritual direction? Should they have a spiritual director whom they meet on a regular basis? Personally I don't think so... Not in the logic of monastic tradition.

Total openness nowadays: tyranny of consciences.
Danger of many new communities

Corollary: two forms of superiors and of communities.

Either a community that has an abbot
Or an Abbot who has a community.

That conditions the manner to form novices, also the manner to make foundations.

**THE PASTORAL MISSION OF THE ABBOT/ABBESS:
THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN ITS CONCRETE REALITY
*[Earlier version given at GC of CCSB, Las Huelgas 2016; revised RAFMA February 4, 2019]***

In its fundamentals the pastoral mission (the ministry of the abbot/the service of authority) continues to be founded on the prescriptions of the Rule of Benedict and the requirements of the Constitutions. Monastic life is the way of salvation (Pr. 48) for those who are called to it by God. The abbot acting in the place of Christ is to teach, ordain and command the Lord's commandments (2.4) and will be judged on his teaching and the obedience of his disciples. He should rule by teaching and even more by example (2.11). There is to be no place for personal preferences to be shown in his ministry. We are all one in Christ and "God has no favourites". (2.20). He is to be equally loving to all. He must adapt himself to the character of each one (2.32). While he is responsible in both spiritual and temporal matters, (C. 33.1) he must not pay attention to temporal matters to such an extent that he fails to recognize or underestimates the salvation of the souls entrusted to his care,

(2.33). He is accountable to God for those entrusted to his care and in exercising this responsibility he will also be brought to conversion (2.40). His task is to be of profit to his brothers rather than just preside over them (64.8). He is a person who listens to others for counsel and no one is excluded as a possible source of expressing God's will. His task is to discover God's will through listening to the word of God in Scripture, prayer, the Rule and monastic tradition, the counsel of the brothers and the circumstances in which the community lives. He should be learned in the divine law, be chaste, temperate and merciful – always preferring mercy to judgment. He is to mistrust his own frailty and, in correcting, to do so with prudence and charity according to the situation. A restless spirit, anxiety and suspicion are hazards to be avoided by the abbot because they take away peace. Forethought and consideration, discernment and moderation are to characterize the instructions and behavior of the abbot – in a word, discretion which provides both challenge and support for the needs and desires of each one. The "saving of souls" is God's work according to Benedict (and the Gospel) and so pastoral care's initial and ultimate recourse is always prayer and never despairing of God's mercy. The abbot is the minister to a community that, together, returns to God and eternal life along the path of obedience by means of faith and monastic observance, in a mutual love that prefers nothing whatever to Christ.

This is a brief summary of the main elements that animate the pastoral mission of the abbot in the Rule of Benedict and the Constitutions. A more contemporary expression of the service of authority in consecrated life is found in the instruction from the CIVCSVA of May 11, 2008.

Looking at some elements of this document it points out some priorities in the service of authority. The person in authority is called to serve an ideal much greater than themselves and so needs to cultivate an attitude of humble seeking at the service of what the Spirit wants to realize through the gifts given to the community. So openness to listening to others and to the signs of the times through a daily familiarity in prayer with the Word of God, the Rule and other norms of the life is a fundamental requirement.

The one in authority is called to promote the dignity of the person, by paying attention to each member of the community and to his or her growth, giving to each one the appropriate appreciation and positive consideration, nurturing sincere affection towards all and keeping reserved all that is said in confidence.

Persons in authority are called to inspire courage and hope in the midst of difficulties. They must help their brothers and sisters to accept the difficulties of the present moment. In situations where diminishment and increasing fragility are experienced they are invited to recall the perennial values of consecrated life especially the fact that "nothing is more important, beautiful and true than spending one's own life in the service of the Lord and for the least of his children". They will be present in critical moments and ready to support and care for those in need while also recognizing their own limits and need for help and so able to turn failures and defeats into rich learning experiences. They are called to keep alive the charism of their own religious family in the Church, understanding it and making it part of themselves and seeing its place in ecclesial life. An important element here is the call to accompany the journey of ongoing formation and what is meant by this is that of accompanying the persons for whom they are called to care throughout their lives. This is done not only by offering help in resolving

possible problems or in managing possible crises but also in paying attention to the normal growth of each one in every phase and season of life which guarantees a youthful spirit and makes the person ever more conformed to the sentiments which were in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2.5). And so a high level of openness to being formed as well as the ability to learn from life and allowing oneself to be shaped by human relationships and a sense of mutual responsibility are important ways of "ongoing formation".

In the second part of the 2008 document on the service of authority in community life it notes that in recent years a renewed concept of anthropology has made the importance of the relational dimension of the human person much more evident. This conception is confirmed in the image of the human person found in Scripture and it has undoubtedly influenced the way of conceiving relations within the religious community with a greater accent on openness to others and the enrichment that can follow from this. It has also influenced, at least indirectly the spirituality of communion which it sees "as the spiritual climate of the Church at the beginning of the Third Millennium". It further states that "it is the main pathway for the future of a believing life and of Christian witness" which "finds its uncompromising reference in the Eucharistic mystery..."

Within this framework the person in authority is to promote the growth of fraternal life and a number of ways are outlined:

Listening is one of the principal ministries of superiors for which they must always be available. This means accepting the other unconditionally, giving her space in one's own heart. They are reminded that one who does not listen to a brother or sister does not know how to listen to God! Time spent in listening is never time wasted.

Creating an environment of trust will be the basis for promoting sincere and free dialogue which enables acceptance of those problems that can easily arise from searching, deciding, working, and together undertaking the best ways of realizing a fruitful collaboration.

Whoever is in charge has the responsibility for the final decision but must arrive at it not by herself but rather by valuing the greatest possible free contribution of all. The community is what its members make it. It is not enough to place material goods in common but personal and spiritual goods need to be shared too. Not all will arrive easily at this level of sharing but authority is urged to balance wisely this orientation with the art of being patient, not expecting instant results – God is the one and only Lord who can touch and change hearts.

Being at the service of the individual and of the community and respecting both elements is not always easy to put into practice. It challenges the balance of the person in authority and his ability to take the positives of each one and to make the best use of the strengths of each one. This can only be done with right intention and interior freedom so that one is not too concerned to please and to humor but rather with accomplishing the demands of the charism and communal calling in each situation. The call of all is to accept decisions taken in a spirit of faith and for the sake of the Gospel.

In a section on community discernment which recognizes that proper law will have its own procedures on various issues it lists a number of attitudes that can be helpful in bringing a discerning spirit to decision-making processes that involve the community: * the determination to seek nothing other than the divine will; *openness to recognize in each brother or sister the ability to discover the truth, even if partial; *attention to the signs of the times, to the expectations of people, to the needs of the poor, to the needs of evangelization, to the priorities of the Church today and to indications of Chapters and of major superiors; *freedom from prejudice and excessive attachment to one's own ideas; *courage to ground firmly one's own ideas while opening oneself to new perspectives; *firm proposal to maintain unity in any case; *while the final decision rests with authority still the community is the best place in which to recognize and accept the will of God.

In a section on discernment, authority and obedience there is this telling sentence: "True love for the community is really what makes persons in authority able to reconcile firmness and patience, listening to each one, and the courage to make decisions, overcoming the temptation to be deaf and mute."

A final section in this treatment of authority and obedience in community life is on fraternal obedience and opens with a quote from RB 72 on mutual obedience. But it is Saint Basil who answers his own question: "In what way do we have to obey each other?" with a quote from the Gospel: "Let him who would be great among you become the servant of all" (see Mk 10.44). "True fraternity is based on the recognition of the dignity of the brothers or sisters and becomes concrete in the attention given to others and to their needs It demands being interiorly free". "It was for liberty that Christ freed us" (Gal.5.1). He has freed us that we might be able to encounter God in innumerable ways in daily life.

There we have a summary of the Benedictine view of the pastoral care of the abbot and a contemporary expression of Church teaching on the exercise of authority in consecrated life.

The criteria used by the Holy See (CIVCSVA) for assessing the autonomy of a house juridically and in reality are: membership, leadership, formation and economy. That is to say if the community has sufficient membership; has members to take up leadership roles; has members capable of forming others to the life and has an economy that can sustain the community. These are succinct and basic requirements for a viable and healthy community. It is clear also that some of these criteria can be met in some ways from outside the community, e.g., formation.

EVALUATION OF DELEGATE

RAFMA MEETING AT L'ETOILE NOTRE DAME / BENIN FEB 2019

My name is Br. Michael Were, I joined monastic life in the year 1997 at Our Lady of Victoria Abbey in Kenya and I took my solemn vows in 2004. In 2008 the community was transferred to Uganda in Masaka diocese and that is where our monastery exists now.

It was my first time to attend the Africa regional meeting as a delegate at l'Etoile Notre Dame Monastery in Benin in West Africa, which took place from the 28th of January to the 8th of February 2019.

The meeting was having the following agendas; first the reading of all the house reports from all communities, second was the conferences from Dom Armand on spiritual paternity and the delegation of the Fr. Immediate' responsibilities, third the conference from the Abbot General on Pastoral mission of the Abbot in the rule of St. Benedict and at the end of the conference we got an opportunity to go and share in groups of what differentiates Cistercians from other monastic communities.

I observed when the meeting was opened by the president Dom Jean Bosco Kamali that he involved all the members of English and French speaking by introducing and congratulating the newly elected superiors, that is Mother Regina and Fr. Jean Chrysostom.

The president engaged all members and all participated well. The president was able to satisfy everyone's questions and the secretaries listened attentively and penned down the minutes.

What I learnt when the house reports were being read from all the communities; that we are all connected in one way or another in challenges and in the community life such as manual labor and prayers. I was impressed by the comments on the purpose of the visitation made by Dom Vedaste the prior of Makoto.

"The visitation is not the solution to solve the problems of the community; neither to punish some ruddy members in the community but, to help their member who is in problems. The role of Fr. Immediate is to encourage the brothers to be responsible for themselves. The visitation letter is like a doctor's prescription that he gives to the patient to follow up his treatment. So the aim of the visitation card is to help the community to work up on their fragility".

The conference of Dom Armand on spiritual paternity was much enriching and spiritually building. His conferences helped me to grow deeper in my monastic journey when he mentioned why the Abbot is called Abba; St. Benedict speaks of the exercises of the spiritual fatherhood within the community. He spoke of the mission the abbot has to incarnate and exercise his fatherhood to the brothers. "The abbot must always remember what his title *Abbas* signifies. This title is given in vision of faith, and a monk believes he is a representative of Christ \ vicar in the monastery.

The Abbot and mother Abbess must incarnate the love of Fatherhood by showing the same affection to all his brothers and sisters. He must make Christ alive in them, i.e. Lead them gradually to a more perfect conformity to the image of Christ, giving advice, exhortation and, if needed, through correction of their faults.

The Abbot General gave talks on Pastoral mission of the Abbot in the rule of St. Benedict. It entitles that, the Abbot should be a real model in the community and equal to all, and should correct by his prudence according the circumstances, and the sense of mutual relation which is very important for both initial and ongoing formation

The Abbot General put it clearly that the role of the Abbot's council, is to advice the Abbot in amicable way but not pressure him on his final decisions.

During our group sharing about what differentiates Cistercian monastic life and other monastic life like Benedictines, Carmelite Franciscan?

We came out with the following points:

1. Cistercians values and observances.
2. Cistercian simplicity,
3. Hospitality
4. Chapter of charity
5. Universality of the Order,
6. Paternity
7. The Order has the same habit.

To conclude: My experience in the Africa Regional meeting, there was unity and cooperation among superiors during the meeting and especially when the superiors voted unanimously to the monastery of Abakaliki to be raised to the rank of an Abbey and the pre- foundation of the monastery Maromby to the rank of a foundation. There was a lot of respect and mutual understanding of one another at the time of asking and answering questions, which were concluded well.

From Br. Michael Were (Our Lady of Victoria monastery in Uganda)

Dear, Fathers and Mothers

Subject: Letter Of Thanks and gratitude.

Grace and Peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are grateful to you and the entire RAFMA region for having given me and Br. Michael a chance of being with you in the regional meeting. It was a remarkable exercise and it will help us in our spiritual growth and the spiritual growths of our communities because now we will live exemplary monastic life! Brother Michael has given us the summary of it all.

We are very much thrilled for having been chosen for this awesome honor. Hence, as beneficiaries for that matter, we are very much appreciative for your kind support.

Sr. Rose Iburabwize

Butende.

A REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF FORMATION (English speaking) Sr. Elizabeth

INTRONCTION: Am Sr. Elizabeth, born in April 1975. I entered the monastery in 1997 and made my first profession 2001. Finally I made my solemn vows in 2006.

My gratitude goes to all of you fathers and mothers for having trusted me with this noble duty to serve the region as secretary for formation in 2017. And on this note I have very little experience in this regard but I believe that gradually I will catch up.

As far as I know I haven't heard of any planned workshops on formation in the region as a whole but as I was listening to the house reports I heard that there is an association in Nigeria called **BECAN (BENEDICTINE CISTERCIAN IN NIGERIA)** which started last year and holds its workshop round August every year for a month. Another of the same kind is in East Africa called **BECIAKU (Benedictine Cistercian Kenya Uganda)** there will be some workshops on these dates, from the 9th – 15 of June 2019 it will be a workshop for first year novices. It will take place at Karen Kenya Nairobi. It will be based on the following topics, Cannon Law, liturgy in general, self-sustainability, common life, monastic vows, human sexuality and leadership. The lecturers are Benedictines. Our two communities benefited last year together with their formators. There will be yet another workshop for the juniors, it will be held at the Prince of Peace monastery (Benedictine) Tigon Kenya, on the 22nd of July to the 2nd of August 2019.

Outside our region but in the region of Isles, there will be a course for juniors, but also open to the 2nd year novices and 1st year solemnly professed. It will take place in September from the 4-12th 2019. The facilitator will be Mother Maureen McCabe; she is excellent in formation and has 20 years of experience in this area.

My personal view would be that formation to the Cistercian life in the African set up, more emphasis should be based on a living tradition lived by the members of each individual monastery. There is an African proverb which says: **tell me the one whom you associate with and I will tell you your behaviors or rather who you are.** Therefore candidates who come to us are from a generation of mixed cultures (noise, dot com, throw away) and should be formed, by well experienced brethren, who have lived this Cistercian culture that has survived generations, emulating the values of silence, solitude and renunciation among others.

May be we can also consider the idea of other regions, having refresher courses, workshops for our formators, so that they can share the challenges they encounter and it will foster zeal and renewal, because they normally get burnt out and used to as the years go by. Hence the enthusiasm they had turns into I don't care attitude, possessiveness, eventually the ones that are being formed turn into formators this is dangerous.

In this short experience there has been a challenge of poor communication which brings about poor responses and can hinder planning and sharing of information. We need to create a network of communication without undermining the treasure we are trying to preserve. Another challenge is that of language of which am going to try to learn some basic French.

However I also count my blessings: I have got the opportunity of getting first class information about what is going on in the Order as regards to formation and am grateful to the opportunity given, and am also humbled to be in this meeting for the first time as secretary for formation and thanks to all who have made this possible for me.

Thank you! Sr. Elizabeth Email: (luzigebetty@gmail.com)

PRESENTATION Short Sharing on the Art of wining souls in Monastic Formation (Fr. Justin)

This was one of the topics we had in the MFP program, for the formators in Rome and Assisi from March to June 2017. It was a great moment of sharing experience among the formators from various countries. At the end of the Seminar we had the opportunity of sharing some ideas on our web site the *Newsletter*.

This text has 3 main points: *1. Model of change, 2. Teaching of the Tradition, 3. Model of Formation for the present generation.*

1. Model of Change in monastic setting

The formation in the novitiate has become difficult because the candidates are from various world and they come with many influences. If the difference in age is great it will not make formation easier.

Then we can ask ourselves what is our model when talking of formation? A theologian of this time asked "can we save the Church?" We can put it the other way: "can we save the monastic life?" Yes! But how? This is what we are trying to say.

a) In being coherent or, having a common vision. To have a common vision means that to be coherent with our time and with our way of life. Sometimes lack of common vision can create a lot of suffering in the hearts of members. This common vision is both on community level as well as an individual exercise. *"During a meeting, the president of one region said that there is necessity of formation on the "card" for every candidate, because of the traditional "menu" cannot be digested by all."* There should be a need of establishing a dialogue between the arrivals and the elders. This implies that the necessity of a different look on Monastic life so that it can be able to talk to today's world. This implies a fidelity to the Tradition and the openness to the signs of the time.

We can also talk of the change in monastic tradition as Dom Armand talked of it, in the desert it was based on the individual (*what can I do to be saved, Father give me a word*). But the cenobitic life is based on the, the community, the rule and the leader. The post-modern monastery is based on questions; the candidates are asking a lot of questions: what is poverty, obedience, chastity, stability, non-vacations? Then talking about formation what do we mean?

b) Remarks and observations. What is the image of sanctity of Monastic life today? *"When someone wants to imitate somebody else he has the chance to express himself badly"*. We should be ourselves. Today the individual value of the person has to be recognize, it is what the Abbot General said yesterday. If we want to listen to God we should listen to the other (this other is a person and God).

c) The changes in monastic formation

In the desert, the formation is ascetic, pedagogical, limited to personal meeting, to a word of wisdom. In the cenobitic life, the formation consists in living essentially the rule; in the reform period, the accent is on self-awareness, sustainability, prayer, devoted life. The formation of priest follows the philosophical and theological program. In community life the emphasis is on the way we live the common good to each according to his need as the first Christian community (This was talked about by Father Jean Bosco, in the Seminar he gave to the Cistercians, Benedictines Carmelites in Lubumbashi 2017 two years ago). I have sent the summary of it to the Newsletter.

In the desert we have access to wisdom through the question *"Abba, give me a word, that I may have life"*. In the community life obedience is modeled to maintain good order that the machine can keep on moving. In the established institutions authentic life is synonymous to life interior life. But in our own life what is the color of obedience? *"I say you do it"*? Or a dialogue, consensus! In order to find what the Spirit says to the Church.

In our communities we have courses given by eminent professors on Liturgy, the Fathers of Cîteaux, on the Great lines of the Benedictine rule, the human development, or the Discernment for nuns and monks. Confucius said *"To learn without reflecting, is a waste of time, to reflect without learning is dangerous."* I have learnt a lot during this meeting and I have appreciated the capacity of understanding each other.

2. *Teaching of Tradition*

This implies conversion. But we ask ourselves what is tradition? It comes from the Latin word *traditio*, which means act of transmission. What is transmitted is not put in the museum, but lived because tradition is about the day to day life, until we create a home culture. However in tradition, there is an element of betrayal (*traditio, traditore*). It means that in this process of transmission some elements are being changed. This justifies the two sides of the tradition: progressive and conservative. Remember that when the tradition is kept libraries it dies, but it lives when it is handed over. First it needs to be received, to be loved and to be lived.

3. Here we have some models of formation for the present generation

In formation, the roles are complementary between ***God, candidate, community, formator and the Holy Spirit***. And so, the formator is the bridge between the new and the old, by his simple presence. This saying helped me so far "*Don't tell but show me*". In his book "*The grace can do more*" Dom André Louf, said that "In formation we should be confident to God and to His help, but remaining attentive to the prayer, to the liturgy and to the *Lectio Divina*," as Fénelon said it so well "*the formator must never go in front of the grace, but follow it*".

Conclusion. From the above reflection we can come up with some recommendations: in forming our members it is helpful to touch these areas; formation to solitude, to the community, at work, to calmness, to prayer, *Lectio Divina*, to poverty, this is not exclusively proper to the Franciscans. Cardinal Robert Sarah said that those who make propaganda for Zero poverty are against Christianity. We also need formation in stability which is not inert but to find ones balance on a moving ship. (Fr. Justin M.)

