

# Congregation of Christian Brothers

## West Africa District

(GHANA, THE GAMBIA, LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE)

# Wan Pot News



**Monthly West Africa District News Publication**  
**January 2016**



Liberia 1969



The Gambia 1988



Sierra Leone 1985



Ghana 2001

"Nothing needs to be different for us to be whole. It is not a matter of change as much as it is of merciful acceptance."  
Steven Levine

**WEST AFRICAN DISTRICT  
NEWSLETTER  
“WAN POT”**

**EDITORIAL COMMENT**

**Greetings from the District Newsletter Editorial Team; we send you our warmest New Year greetings and hope you had a fun-filled festive season and are back in your respective communities, ministry sites/project sites refreshed and energized. We apologize to our esteemed readers for not furnishing you with information for the month of December, 2015. Most Brothers were out on holidays and as a result our community correspondents could not supply us with the necessary information that would have facilitated the process of publishing the December issue.**

**We however, welcome you to our Newsletter of the West Africa District and the first for the year 2016. Our primary objective for 2016 as an editorial team is to convey all significant happenings in our communities, projects and ministry sites to our vast audience. As we strive to give our domestic happenings an international flavour, we also rely on your support and mentoring as we learn on the job.**

**Tengbeh Town - District News  
Br. Noel Bradshaw**

Greetings from West Africa District,

All well today, Sunday Morning, as brothers' return to base from the Lusaka Formation Review meetings. We too are returning from travels, the age of traveling. My own shift took me to our community in Yengema, in the Kona Township, home of the diamond trade. And yet the poorest of the poor, still not a stone upon a

stone since the war, the forgotten people of Sierra Leone. Hardly a more frontier community in the congregation.

A little bit of history for us that are not familiar with Yengema and the brothers. This community was founded by Victor Deen, Augustine Williams, Francis and Jonathan. My memory is of these brave fore-runners traversing the long road to Kono in the midst of the war, the days of the convoys and rebel ambushes. Of when Augustine and Francis were ambushed and Eddie Cowan and myself traveling daily to Matatoka to join the interested parties for the latest news of survivors. There the soldiers, or sobels, or kamajors, or ecomog or Nigerians, and, depending on whom you were talking to on any given day, would have the latest news. The huge cartoons of AK 47s being assembled, fired and tried, made ready for action, funded by the blood diamonds from Yengema, Kono. Eventually we were told that people had finally visited the ambush, no survivors or dead bodies, good news bad news, only time would tell. Augustine was to knock at our door in Makeni at 2 a.m. one night, while Francis made his way to Freetown. All was well that ended well.

The road to Kono is another story, but good news again as work has started at both ends, Salcost and the Chinese, so by God's power the long awaited hopes of the Kono people will finally be realized. Great feats of engineering are underway, roads being cut through the sides of mountains, bridges under construction and when the dust settles, the most beautiful scenery is visible. It would remind one of The Ring of Kerry or some such place. So, tourism and mining at least will enable recovery. From the old to the new, and Anthony, Michael, Jonathan and Dominic presently hold the fort. They work with the boys and girls schools along with the co-ed secondary school. They tell me the students are more interested in searching for that elusive diamond than in education. Evidence shows the impact various communities have made to the school, to the youth and to the parish community of Yengema. Presently a new school library is

nearing completion, thanks to our project office, ERD and the communities past and present of Yengema.

More famous, renowned and native citizens of Kono could provide a more complete and detailed account of this well-known place in the history of Sierra Leone, none more so than our brother, Chris Teh. Then there is his Grace, Archbishop Tamba Charles, presidents and vice presidents, first Ladies and second Ladies who also hail from there. The miracle is why the good graces of office have never been used for their own people. Perhaps a past pupil of the school, Mr. Yambusu, ambassador to China, has been instrumental in ensuring the Chinese are involved in the road construction, the gateway to prosperity. The signs of the times tell us that situation is looking up for the brothers and people of this marginalized place.

We pray the New Year continues to bring good health and happiness to all of you.

**Choggu Community, Ghana**  
**Br. Christian Hazeley**

We extend to all New Year greetings from Tamale, Ghana. Wishing you a great new year filled with many blessings, happiness and success. All the very best in 2016!

The future of any society depends on education! On Tuesday 12 January 2016, schools reopened for the second term. The administration of Kanvilli R.C. School had its first staff meeting and In-Service Training for teachers. The training sessions were facilitated by our two Vice-Principals, Br. Patrick Nuanah and Mr. Yam Boar Dubik.



Br. Patrick Nuanah, Vice Principal, facilitating a session during the training of teachers at Kanvilli workshop.

The whole staff was present at the workshop. In his opened remarks the Head teacher, Br. Paul Mark Luseni, welcomed all in attendance. He encourage teachers to seize the opportune to learn some new teaching methods and implement them in their teaching profession. The program of activities were: School Based Assessment, Lesson Planning, and Preparation of Teaching Learning Materials. Toward the end of the workshop teachers were reminded to familiarize themselves with the Child Protection Policy which is to be signed by every teacher. We were happy also to have the presence of the Circuit Supervisor from The Ministry of Education with us at this workshop.

In most African cultures it easy to say you are welcome, but difficult to say good bye. On the 2 January 2016 the Choggu community bid farewell to Br. Samuel Amara who has been assigned to Calaba Town Community. As a community we wish Br. Samuel all the best in his community and ministry. On 7th January 2016, the community celebrated the gifts of life of Br. Paul Mark Luseni. The program began with community prayer which was led by Br. Eric, and followed by a community outing at Tacobama restaurant, where we enjoyed delicious European foods and drinks. As a community we wish Paul a very Happy Birthday.



Construction work is in progress on our new Science Laboratory. The work is at foundation level.

**“Education is the most powerful  
weapon you can use to change the  
world.”**  
**Nelson Mandela**

**Ceremony of Welcoming & Missioning  
For Br. Joseph Jesu Abdulai  
By Br. Joseph Gomeh**

Greetings once again from Blama I trust that you had an enjoyable festive season.

It is always a blessing to have new members joining the congregation. It is a sign that there is hope for the future. The ceremony of welcoming and missioning was graced by the family of Joseph and brothers from Blama, Njala, Kono, Bo Formation, and Freetown communities, and the Marrah Community in Kebbie Town, which served as the host community.

We started the ceremony with a beautiful prayer led by Br. Martin Vamboi. In his introduction, he said that Joseph has been on a journey for the past three years towards making a decision to become a Christian Brother. Brother Martin went further to say that Br. Joseph has started another journey in his life as a C.B. After his brief introduction, Br. Andrew Turay of our DLT explained our life as Christian Brothers to the family of Br. Joseph, highlighting the meaning of the three evangelical vows which we take as Brothers. The family of Joseph presented some traditional items to the D.L.T as a sign of gratitude for accepting Joseph into our family of Brothers. Many prayers were offered after which the Deputy District Leader, Br. Albert Gomez, invited all to extend a hand of blessing over Brother Joseph, praying that the light of Christ will continue to shine in front of him as he journeys with his brothers in community. Br. Albert concluded by missioning Joseph to the Marrah Community. Joseph had been part of the Orientation Program in Lusaka and he is being referred to as the ambassador of T.S.T. So if you want to know more about OWITF, you can contact Br. Joseph he will be happy to tell you. We welcome Joseph back into our District and wish him a happy stay in the Marrah Community.

**Advocacy Corner!!**

I am pleased to inform all friends and Edmund Rice Family members that we have just formed an advocacy school club in Saint Joseph's Secondary School, Blama. This school club aims at promoting and protecting human rights and raising awareness on environmental

hazards that are taking place within the community. And we are also aware of the need to protect our common home which is mother earth by planting trees and keeping the environment green.



**Br. Joseph receives blessing from his brothers and family members.**



**Joseph's family presents gifts to the Brothers**



**Br. Joseph (centre) with family members.**



**Brothers await the beginning of ceremony**



**FORMATORS FROM THE AFRICAN PROVINCE MEET IN LUSAKA:** Two weeks of intensive meetings, skilfully facilitated by Br. Michael Burke and Sr. Lynette PBVM, and drawing upon earlier input from Brothers around the Province, concluded on January 24. Significant changes are in the making, beginning with candidacy through to Final Profession and beyond. Brs. Hugh O'Neill, Julian McDonald of the CLT, Michael de Klerk, African Province Leader, and representatives from each of the District Leadership Teams attended the meetings. West Africa representatives included Brs. Albert Gomez, Victor Alpha, Joseph Turey, Martin Vamboi, Titus Kallon, Milton Lawrence & Martin Binvenya.

## Njala Mokonde Community Br. Abu Kargbo

Fraternal and New Year greetings from Njala Community and its environs. The New Year brought with it profound blessings from the mystery we call God. And so like other communities, we are thankful for this enormous opportunity to live the Great Mystery, knowing that we are presumably, not more significant than those who are unfortunate to experience the fortunes of this New Year. We are also grateful for our lives here and for the lives of those who support us, especially our cook, grounds man and many others who contributed immensely to our peaceful living here during the previous year. Without the people mentioned above, our ministry and community living would presumably not have been successful. Many thanks to DLT for their unflinching support in diverse ways throughout the previous year. What else can we do without the DLT!

As many brothers and other readers might know, significant changes have taken place in our community with regards to movement. Titus left the community for Lusaka, Zambia for a comprehensive two weeks conference on formation review process with brothers from Bo

Formation house and Calaba Town community. However, he is expected in the country and in

Njala community on the 24<sup>th</sup> this month. Andrew Koroma, who was in Hamilton, has joined the Njala community on transfer since the 5<sup>th</sup> of January. A big welcome to Andrew for his willingness and readiness to form part of the Njala community. Andrew will be deployed right a way to the University Secondary School ministry. Still on transfer, Michael who joined the community a year ago has got a nod from DLT to form part of the community in Yengema, Kono. Andrew and I traveled with Mike on the 18<sup>th</sup> this month to Yengema as part of his farewell. We dearly thank Mike for his time in this community and all that he has been to the wider Njala Mokonde community.

The School ministry has kick-started rather quietly here. Andrew and I have been the brothers representing the community in the school till we are joined by Titus again. We are giving our best as usual. Nothing more! There have been some less privileged kids storming our community house looking for help in getting books, shoes, uniforms. Andrew and I have been doing our bit and pieces to give a bit of help to the more vulnerable ones. All is not going well at the moment in Njala community but we are standing tall in the midst of our challenging times. With God being on our side, nothing we can fear! Have a peaceful new month to you all.

**SAINT AMBROSE CORNER**  
**Br. Samuel Amara**

Greetings from St. Ambrose Academy in Freetown. As I pen these words, I reflect on the St. Ambrose I have always known to be a very good school and particularly a very special place to those who truly know it. The school is about to turn six years old, and that is remarkable. Those who know the school generally love it and especially for its good performance and reputation in the BECE Examinations. Well, its reputation is demonstrated now with the admission of the form ones, for unlike other schools in the Allen Town community, St. Ambrose has become the destination for most pupils coming from primary schools. The beauty of the school is not that it is less expensive, but that it is producing excellent results and parents have been captivated by that. But I tell you, parents' choices are no stronger than our determination and purpose as teachers who are committed to providing excellent educational experiences for the students.

Moreover, the school eloquently captures the shift from being the most wanted to one highly disciplined. Since most parents have chosen the school for their children for the above reason, we shall do our best to uphold its great name.

In other developments the school Administration, Staff and Pupils warmly welcome Br. Martin Vamboi and Br. Samuel Amara for taking on appointments as teachers in the school. Their presence will add new life and development to the growth of the school.

**HAMILTON COMMUNITY NEWS**

**Br. Patrick Boima**

Greetings from the far west of the Freetown peninsular mountain chain. We continue to enjoy the influence of the sea and exercise along the Lakka and Hamilton beach. The community held its first community meeting to commence the proper functioning of community living. We appreciate the presence of Br. Augustine.

Cornelius and I have started ministry at Singh Pied School. The presence of many teaching staff in the school is a big challenge for us. Chatting with some of the teachers, the concern expressed is that Brothers come and go without any proper notification. In that light some are slow in handing over their classes to brothers but slowly we continue to make our presence felt in at least doing something for the day. Con is already popular among the primary school learners and I have been given few JSS classes to teach.

The school is running well with regards teaching but there is a huge problem for sitting accommodation. They classes are packed tight and every morning the pupils have to fight for chairs and benches. The administration wrote to the Formal community for aid from the leadership. We have inherited the concern so with time we will be approaching leadership and the project office to come to the some aid for these young stars who are should expect to be seated comfortably in a classroom to comprehend lessons passed on to them by their teachers.

Thanks wishing you all a happy new month.

**"There is nothing more difficult to carry out or more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order. This arises partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not believe in anything until they have had actual experience of it."**

**Machiavelli**

**Community Update – Gbarnga, Liberia**  
**Br. Cyril Dauda**

Greetings from Gbarnga. All community members are back in community/ministry after a well-deserved and restful Christmas/New Year break. Paul traveled to Sierra Leone for a meeting with DLT, we thank God for his safe return to community. The month of January has been quite fulfilling, never mind the litany of activities that lines it up. As developments continue to unfold this side, the community of brothers thinks it prudent to keep the global Edmund Rice family abreast.

On the 3rd of January, 2016, the Bishop of the Catholic diocese of Gbarnga – Most Rev. Anthony Fallah Boa in a well-attended ceremony that was climaxed by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist launched the Year of Mercy in solidarity with the universal church. In his reflection, he emphasized the centrality of compassion and mercy in the exercise of our Christian faith and urged everyone to be merciful just as our Heavenly Father is merciful. The symbolic opening of the main entrance of the cathedral also formed part of the ceremony.



**Most Rev. Anthony Fallah Boa – Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Gbarnga, launches the Year of Mercy.**

The first phase of the school building project is



**Year of Mercy celebration in Gbarnga**

almost at its completion stage with the workers now doing the cosmetic part of the job. It is expected that at the start of next semester that commences in February, students will be able to use the facility and that will eventually alleviate the trouble of the two shifts system students and members of staff currently grapple with. Thanks to Sylvester who has been at the hem of affairs and doing all he could with support from community members to ensure the successful implementation and completion of the project.

The ten classroom structure is almost completed and gymnasium is already at wall awaiting the final touches.



**The new face of St. Martin's Catholic High School, Gbarnga.**

The St. Martin's Alumni Association, better known as the friends of St. Martin, organized a football tournament for schools in Gbarnga. The rationale behind the initiative was to bring together past students of the school and galvanize resource for the projects they will love to undertake take for the school. The idea was initiated by two former students of the school



who are currently residing in the States. The school was also opportune to benefit from the philanthropic gesture of the Bong Descendants Association of the Stars Collage of Science and Technology in Monrovia that volunteered to repair, install applications and trained both the computer laboratory staff and some of the students in computer programming/installation and basic computer skills respectively. Profound gratitude to the president of the association and the rest of the membership for their thoughtful consideration. We would gladly play the host to them again in the near future.

The community joined the inter-religious organization of the Gbarnga diocese in welcoming the Consolata Sisters who are coming into the diocese for the very first time. The trip to Ganta was fun and accorded the religious (male and female) of the diocese the privilege of getting together for the first time since the outbreak of the deadly Ebola menace that ripped the country apart. We wish the Consolata Sisters a happy stay and a fulfilling ministry. On the Advocacy front, the Edmund Rice Advocacy Society joined the Ebola Accountability Platform team on the community visitation and interaction to the Foloquelleh market. As characteristic of all the other community visitations, the community response and openness to discuss the pertinent issues was resounding and profound. As we continue to interact with communities in our bid to correct the wrongs of the past, the ramifications of the killer virus is becoming more obvious in our communities as Ebola orphans are dropping out of school and survivors struggling with side effects and other complications.

**UPDATE FROM THE COMMUNITY PASTORAL PLACEMENT (CPP) TAMALE NOVIATIE - SHEKINAH CLINIC GORUGU COMMUNITY (by Wallace A. Briggs)**

“If these three months can't impact your formation, then...!” These are almost the exact words, if not exact, from Br. Milton, our novice master, during the last few weeks before our departure to our various communities.

Our community here in the Shekinah clinic compound is made of four young and energetic men from four different nationalities. **Aldones** (Don-Don) from Philippines, **Kelvin** from Kenya, **Joseph** from Zambia and myself **Wallace** from Liberia. **Don-Don** and **Kelvin** are involved in teaching ministry while **Joseph** and myself are doing hospital and feeding program ministries.

They say one photo speaks a thousand words!



**TOP LEFT: Dr. Abdullah (left) the founder of both the feeding program and Shekinah clinic sharing stories with a group of volunteers including myself. TOP RIGHT: Kelvin and Don-Don set and ready for school. BOTTEM: Beneficiaries at the Shekinah clinic**



**Reflection on Edmund  
Alysious Y Sefoi**

New Year greetings from St. Ignatius community Tamale, Ghana, where we are all fine and doing well during our community pastoral placement (CPP).

I am deeply indebted to all Brothers who promoted my vocation within the Edmund Rice family, and all those who have introduced me to Edmund's story.

As I reflect on Edmund Rice's story, I am moved by the following:

- The first thing that struck me was the CHARISM of EDMUND RICE: *“Deeply aware of the father’s providential presence in his life, EDMUND RICE was moved by the Holy Spirit to open his whole heart to Christ present and appealing to him in the poor”*. It is a wonderful opportunity for me to re-examine my world and so to experience Christ first-hand. I reflect too on the good life of being a Religious in the Congregation of Christian Brothers. I feel that here I have a lot to offer, to share and to receive from the poor, marginalized, less privileged and needy.
- Secondly, Edmund Rice built-up people's self-worth, especially in children, by providing education and pastoral care. His desire was to bring them closer to God. This was a wonderful point that touched my heart and awakened in me a deeper layer of reflection, especially when I consider our vulnerability as human beings. It's worthwhile for a human being to feel respected as a dignified person with integrity, becoming aware that he or she is made in God's image. Healthy self-esteem is an ingredient that gives dignity to human existence. Edmund

liberated people in this regard and empowered them by a system of education. It has challenged me to say I must orient myself towards self-reliance and being self-employed instead of looking helpless and dependent on others as I discern my vocation. The way Edmund helped children to probe deeply into their human relationship with God and with their fellow human beings is a constant reminder for me. This process of transformation calls me to work at developing virtues of humility, courage, compassion, faith, love, care and generosity - to be happy in life.

- Finally Edmund's spirituality is an inspiration for me to cultivate a heart-centered spirituality. It draws me into an open air, taking a walk somewhere with a wide horizon. Out there in a solitary place I can review my life. There I can figure out the cracks and ask for God's intervention. Interestingly working in ministry during these days have been a source of invitation, evangelization and revitalization, all good for the soul.

My conversion from Islam to Christianity six years back and joining the Congregation of Christian Brothers has helped to change my world views.

**“Who will ever measure all the good that has come from the spiritual insight, warm heart, and determined faith of Blessed Edmund Rice?”**

**St. John Paul II**

**Oct. 6, 1996**

**Iona College Community  
Renewal of Vows  
Br. Paul Mendy**

Seasonal greeting from Iona College community. I wish you a belated Merry Christmas and a blessed and prosperous New Year. A lot of activities happened in our Iona College community. The college had closed for the semester break and most of the brothers are enjoying their Christmas break with their family members. We were also blessed with the recent visit of Br. Clement Sindazi to New York City. It was a joy having Clement, our African Deputy Province Leader and my former novitiate director in Stellenbosch, visiting our community, after completing his sabbatical in San Francisco, Chicago. I was busy with my exams but the little time I shared with Br. Clement was inspiring and nourishing. He encouraged me to work hard in my studies and to continue to nourish my spiritual life through prayer. Brother, you really gave me the zeal to work very hard with my studies. I strongly believed that your visit to my community and Iona College have given you a good picture about the works of the brothers in the Iona College. The brothers in different communities of New York still hold good memories of you. I thank you for the time you took to visit me and other brothers in New York.

I also renewed my vows on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, 2015. Br. Eugene O'Brien, who is my spiritual mentor, organized a day of recollection for me on the 18<sup>th</sup> of December in preparation for renewing my vows. Renewal of my vows was a big celebration for my community in New York. The brothers in my community are always happy and supportive to see a young brother renewing his vows. It is always inspiring to our lay people from the neighborhood seeing a young African

brother renewing vows in Iona College chapel. Fr. Mike, a Salesian priest, was the chief celebrant of the

Mass. The Salesian communities in New Rochelle are very helpful in celebrating Eucharist in most of the Christian Brothers communities.

Fr. Mike's homily was excellent. It inspired me and challenged me as a younger brother to reflect deeply on my spiritual call as I renewed my vows. I will summarize his homily. He started his homily by saying that, "At the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy" (Luke 1: 44). The Virgin Mary has just had her own visitation, the appearance of Archangel Gabriel to her to invite her to become mother of the savior. She's declared herself the Lord's humble handmaid, ready to do whatever he asks. The angel has given her a sign that the Lord's Word is good; her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth is 6 months pregnant.

(Luke never tells us how old Elizabeth is, only that she's "advanced in years." In the 1st century, that may have meant she was in her mid-or late 40s. No reflection on present company—especially since I'm right up there with you!)

Immediately Mary goes to visit Elizabeth, bearing her Son in her womb; she is already *Theotokos* - "God-bearer," the beloved title of the Eastern Churches for her. Furthermore, the Son of God in her womb is already an active presence among humanity, recognized by both



**LEFT PHOTO: FRONT ROW (l-r) Brothers Jerry Johnson, Robert Novak, Eugene O'Brian, Paul Mendy, Kenneth Chapman, Joseph Morgan & Harry M. Dunkak. BACK ROW (l-r): Brs. Kevin Devlin and Joseph A. Cussen. RIGHT PHOTO: Fr. Mike with Paul Mendy.**

holy Elizabeth and her unborn son (who will be named John and nicknamed “the Baptist”).

Fr. Mike further explained that Elizabeth responded to Mary’s presence with words of praise for both Mary and the One who will be named Jesus after his birth, and with wonderment that “*the mother of my Lord should come to me*” (1:43). Elizabeth has already experienced the wonder, the miracle, of a completely unexpected pregnancy, one beyond the normal course of nature. Now she marvels that her Lord should come directly to her.

The wonder of the incarnation of God’s only-begotten Son is that he should come to us at all. In no other religion is God so personal, so close, literally so down-to-earth! The book of Proverbs speaks of divine Wisdom’s “*delight in the children of men*” (8:31); Jesus, the Wisdom of God in person, delights to come to us, to share our humanity and restore us to the place in the heavenly household that we had forfeited by sin. God delights to be among us! Elizabeth was surprised, and perhaps we too are surprised. But after the incarnation and after the gift of the Holy Eucharist, how can we be surprised that God wants to be with us? Furthermore, isn’t another name for Jesus, *Emmanuel*?

Unborn John the Baptist recognizes the presence of his unborn Lord in Mary’s womb and “*leaps for joy.*” God-with-us is cause for joy! The God who delights to be among us brings us joy, brings us pleasure in his company. The God who sings to us of his love for us in the Song of Songs invites our own loving response. The female persona, representing Israel, exclaims, “*I sought him whom my heart loves*” (3:1). The Song cites the mutual excitement of the lovers in such verses as: “*Hark! my lover!—here he comes springing across the mountains, leaping across the hills*” (Song 2:8)—a verse that may be in the back of Luke’s mind as he portrays Mary’s visit to the hill country of Judah; and “*Let me see you, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet, and you are lovely*” (3:14).

Advent is a season of joyful anticipation of God’s coming to be with us. Last Sunday was Gaudete Sunday: Rejoice, for the Lord is near! In a few days we’ll be singing “Joy to the World.”

Fr. Mike also talked about my renewal of vows in his sermon. He told the congregation that in a few minutes they’ll have the joy of Bro. Paul’s renewing of his temporary vows as a Christian Brother; the joy of witnessing his response to God’s personal love for him thru a commitment to live for God and to love God and his neighbor in the special calling of being a brother.

He also reiterated that he was not familiar with the particulars of the Brothers’ Constitutions, of course. He said their SDB Constitutions commit them to be “*signs and bearers of God’s love for young people, especially those who are poor*” (art. 2). He went on by saying that he imagines that the Brothers have some similar ideal, whether it’s verbalized or not. In terms of today’s gospel reading, Bro. Paul is committing himself to be like the Virgin Mary, to bear Christ to the young or whomever the Congregation will send him to, and to be a living sign of God’s loving presence to them. All of us brothers are signs of God’s love for his Church thru the way we live like the poor, chaste, and obedient Christ; thru our practice of Christ’s love for young people in our schools and other institutions, and Christ’s love for our brothers in community. We can’t carry Jesus in our wombs like Mary, but we can like her carry him in our hearts—that applies to all us here tonight, not just the religious. St. Augustine famously says that Mary conceived him in her heart before ever she conceived him in the womb; (Discourses 215: 4; cf. “On Holy Virginity,” 3.) indeed, if she hadn’t had God in her heart, she couldn’t have said, “*Be it done to me according to your word*” (Luke 1:38). So, Paul, you will travel like Mary—perhaps not in haste, perhaps not into any hills—but certainly to the houses of God’s people, i.e., to the places where they dwell and are waiting for God to come to them. You will be God’s presence to

them, incarnated in your words and actions and in your heart.

Whatever the particulars of your future mission might be—education or catechesis in some form, I suppose—it will be your mission to bring joy with you. You may not make people literally leap for joy like John in Elizabeth's womb – (although I've heard something about African liturgies!!); but you must make their hearts and minds leap for joy, bring joyful smiles to their faces—not because they've met you but because they've met Jesus whom you carry with you.

“A sad saint is a sorry saint,” says St. Francis de Sales. Joyful Christianity is a hallmark of Pope Francis, one of the qualities that makes him so universally appealing. His 1st major message to the Church was the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, “The Joy of the Gospel.” The word *joy* appears in some form 107x in that message. If the Gospel doesn't make us joyful, how can we expect people to be attracted to it? If we religious aren't joyful in our vocation, how can we expect young people to want to join us in this way of following Jesus? If we aren't filled with joy (even when life presents us with inevitable challenges in community, in the apostolate, in our health, in our relations with the wider world), then we're in the wrong vocation—because God has created us for happiness. You, Paul, must be a witness to that among your brothers, among the young, among everyone wherever God will lead you.

In conclusion, I want to thank the brothers at Iona College and St. Joseph Community for their support during my renewal of vows and for helping to make it a memorable event. I also thank Fr. Mike for celebrating that wonderful and nourishing Eucharist that day. I also thank for Br. Robert Novak for receiving my vows on behalf of the Congregational Leader.

## THANKS & APPRECIATION

Our thanks and appreciation to all who contributed to Wan Pot with news from in and around the District. We continue to ask our valuable readers and contributors to send their contributions to Brothers Leo Kamara and Joseph Gomeh.

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## Prayers Requested

Please remember in your prayers the soul of Kevin Holden, elder brother of Br. John Holden. Kevin passed away on January 20 in Red Deer, Alberta. Please keep him and John and the family in your prayers.

Also please remember John who had experienced some health problems in Lusaka and will be returning to Canada for medical follow-up.