



MISSION IN THE ARABIAN GULF

and live somewhere else; in another community and country, and live there according to His teachings, because what Jesus Christ teaches us is not just for one group of people, but for every person in the world. He created every single human being, and his message is not a private matter or in any way exclusive; it is for everyone.

We all know that ‘mission’ means being sent, or being ‘sent out’. In terms of religion our way of thinking has always been “being sent to preach the Gospel”, “to teach people about Jesus, who himself was sent from God the Father to show us that He loves us and wants only for us to be happy in peace”.

In the past, the word usually applied to people being sent out from Christian countries in order to bring people of other faiths around to a Christian way of thinking. Thousands of heroic people who loved God as Christians know Him, went out to other lands. Many suffered and died; some from the climate and difficulties of life where they went to live, and many because they were killed because people did not want to see the light of Christ.

To teach what Christianity means is necessary for Christians because Jesus himself told us to do so. It typically means staying just where we are and living a life in accordance with the teachings of Jesus and his followers. The best way of teaching, of course, is by our actions. Each in our own situation is called to be honest, true, and loving.

However, we also believe that God calls some people to be exceptions. He does not want them to stay in their own home, in their own country, but to go

Experience in the Arabian Gulf

I was sent out as a missionary priest to the Vicariate Apostolic of Arabia in the Arabian Gulf. A Vicariate Apostolic is like a diocese, but in an area where there are no native Christians. A Bishop is sent by the Pope to be of service to Christians who may come or who are passing through. Because people travel there for work, there are many Christians in many Gulf countries and there has been a Vicariate Apostolic there since 1888, when the Capuchins of Florence came to Aden. The Bishop, who is called the Vicar Apostolic, and all the priests, are Capuchins, some from Italy and some from elsewhere.



As everyone knows, the countries of the Arabian Gulf—Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia are Muslim countries, where there is little freedom of religion. Some, like Bahrain and the U.A.E. respect our religion and will let us have our churches if the Rulers (the Sheikhs) give permission.

When I first went there in 1990 it was much more difficult. Gulf countries had always been cut off by their culture from the modern world. There had never been any challenge to Islam; they were afraid that we would be a danger to their faith. That was certainly not our intention, and we never tried to convert people. However, those countries needed people to help them develop their countries, through their minerals and their oil, and so they recruited workers from abroad: some from Europe and the United States of America; mostly from other countries, especially India, Malaysia, and The Philippines. The last time we had a parish census in Abu Dhabi we had Catholics from 110 nationalities.

Churches and Schools

The first church we were permitted to build in the Vicariate was in Aden, and before long we had three churches there, as well as primary and secondary schools founded and run by the Italian nuns, the Comboni Sisters also known as the Verona Sisters, because they were founded in Verona for the missions in 1872 by Bishop Daniel Comboni. When the British government was replaced by the Russians in 1967 nearly all Christians left the country. Now there are very few, although the local government asked Mother Teresa of Calcutta to send nuns located in three convents to look after handicapped people, orphans, and the elderly. She agreed on condition that they gave permission for a priest to come who, at the moment, is our only priest in the country. The Sisters, of course, make no attempt to convert people, but do their best to look after them as they believe Christ would wish them to.



Mission and missionaries

Since 1990, when I arrived, the Bishop obtained permission for many more churches and schools run by Sisters from various Congregations to serve the needs of Catholics living in the region. So many Christians live there, that our church, St. Mary's, Dubai, is the parish with the highest Mass attendance in the world. With 10,000 children in the catechism programme, that is not surprising.

The important thing is that the meaning of 'mission' and 'missionaries' has changed. As Christians we are not necessarily going off to people of other faiths or of no faith to bring the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and his mission of reconciliation between each other and between human beings and God. Wherever we happen to be, we are sent there to be a sign of God's good will to all people. I went to the Gulf, where many people are religious and there is great respect for God among Muslims, moreso than in Europe, and my job as a priest was to help people see that all human beings belong together as one respectful, loving family. Each of us is called to work to achieve this, no matter where we are. To love each other does not mean that we are in love with each other, or that we even like each other much. In our catechism, to love each other means wishing well to one another, and praying for one another; and by never allowing ourselves any thought, word or deed to harm anyone. In the words of Jesus Himself: "to bear with one another charitably in complete unselfishness, gentleness, and patience". That is what missionaries go out to teach. If God calls us we must go abroad as missionaries. If it is His will that we stay where we are, let us do that in love and in peace.

*Mgr. Francis Jamieson
Beckenham, UK*



News from the Missions

CAMEROON - TOGOLESE RELIGIOUS PRIEST MURDERED IN YAOUNDÉ



The „Fidei Donum” priest Christophe Komla Badjougou, originally from Togo, was murdered on the evening of October 7 in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. The priest was shot dead in front of the gate of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CICM) in the Mvolyé district.

The Archbishop of Yaoundé, Jean Mbarga, expressed his “deep sadness” and expressed his condolences to the priest’s family, his friends, and the Christian community.

“In these sad circumstances, the Archdiocese of Yaoundé expresses its sincere condolences to Father Christophe’s family, his friends and the faithful of the diocese of Yagoua. The Christian community is invited to pray for him so that he may find grace with God,” said the Archbishop of Yaoundé.

According to the Cameroonian authorities, the priest was killed in a robbery. Images from surveillance cameras at the crime scene have made it possible to reconstruct the events. A police spokesman told the Cameroonian press: “The surveillance cameras at the crime scene show that the priest came from the town of *Dakar en bas* on a motorcycle that dropped him off at the gate of the CICM. A few seconds later, two people on motorcycles can be seen coming. After passing the priest, they turned around and came to the gate where Father Christophe was standing. The images show an altercation between the victim and one of the attackers, who managed to take the priest’s bag. The perpetrator then fired twice in the air and then three shots at the priest, who collapsed on the ground.” Father Christophe was vicar of the parish of St. Peter and Paul in Zouzoui in the diocese of Yagoua, in the north of the country. He was passing through Yaoundé, from where he was going to Italy for a year of formation. Father Christophe belonged to the Association of Silent Workers of the Cross, inspired by the Italian Blessed Luigi Novarese, whose mother-house is in Ariano Irpino, in southern Italy, in the Marian Shrine of Valleluogo. Originally from Togo, he was

Our Franciscan community wishes to thank you for supporting us with prayers and financial help. We finally completed the building of this security wall for our safety, so that we can continue God’s work in the service of the poor and needy.

We deeply appreciate your help and collaboration in our missions. We continue to pray for you and your missionary endeavors.

May God bless and reward you abundantly.

Fr. Godwin Ogam, OFM. Cap

Fort Portal - Uganda



ordained a priest in 2013 in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Trinity in Atakpamé.

In 2014 he became a full member of the SOdC and entered the community of Mouda (Togo), where he carried out his ministry as a formator and parish priest of the parish of Zouzoui.

Agenzia Fides

Can You Help?

A BORE-WELL for Sacred Heart Church, India

The mission in Isagarh was started in 2005. Over the years, the diocese has developed the mission center by establishing a Church, School, Convent and a Rectory. The Diocese has 17 parishes and 55 mission centers. Administering to the spiritual needs of the locals, and with many development programs, the missionaries reach out to poor famers and poverty-stricken people. They have always ventured into new areas of apotolates according to the need of the place and time. In the summer, the Pastor and Sisters who evangelize and work there, find it very difficult to draw water, because the well is drying up.



The solution to this problem is to dig a bore-well, which will serve the needs of the faithful. You have been instrumental and very considerate to the Saga Diocese and its mission activities. I most humbly request you to consider this project for a noble cause and assist us in our desperate need, so that our evangelizing work may continue for God and his people.

Assuring you of our prayers.

Fr. Girish Puthoor, Sagar, India

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Enclosed is \$ my gift for the catechetical formation in Peru.

4/2024

Please remember the following intentions in your prayers:

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