



E-BULLETIN #116

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 219

"Let the risen Jesus enter..."

Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend - with trust: he is life!

If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward, he will receive you with open arms.

If you have been indifferent, take a risk: you won't be disappointed.

If following him seems difficult, don't be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.

- Pope Francis

item 220

evangelising the evangelised

a Pallottine response to a secularised Western culture



The recent visit to our *Heart of Jesus* Province in Germany and Austria provoked in me a lot of perplexing questions which I feel, in some way, compelled to share with readers of our Asia Oceania bulletin. Though there are many other more urgent matters to be attended to after a month-long visitation, I feel that it is equally urgent to attend to the movement of the Spirit within me – hopefully for good reasons.

The opening of the new mission in the Archdiocese of Ayacucho in Peru on 23rd of February 2014 was indeed a spiritually and pastorally nourishing experience. The plight of these simple people, with all their spiritual and materials needs, left a trace of sadness and anguish as well. The thought that we have responded to this cry of God's people, even in a very insignificant way, was something soothing to the heart.

The visitation, particularly to Germany, on the other hand, gave me a taste of a mission land of a different nature. Here I refer to Germany only as representative of the many secularised countries in the West. Generalisation based on a few isolated facts can always be dangerous. The generosity of the German church towards the universal church as well as to the poor all over the world is something known to all of us. However, it is painful to find what a highly secularised, materialistic and individualistic culture can do not only to the faith of the people but also to human life in all its dimensions. It was curious to find two pieces of dry wood picked up from the neighbouring forest mounted on a rusty piece of iron constituting what could be considered as a post-modern lectern in one of the chapels. After erecting the most fabulous and glorious churches for centuries, we seem to be returning to a situation found only in some of the remote villages, a choice made for lack of choices! If it is a return to a more simplified life, closer to nature, probably we are on the right track. But if it is symbolic of a cultural, moral and religious decadence founded on a philosophy of unbridled personal freedom and narcissism, we are witnessing the beginning of the end of a civilisation.

Decrying the evils and perils of present day society is the easiest thing that anybody can do. Nor does it do any good to romanticise the past because, unlike what we often project, every epoch had its glory as well as its challenges. Therefore, it would be good for us to accept the present day realities and respond to the challenges posed by them. In this sense I wish to focus on some very positive experiences that I shared and that seemed to respond to the challenges faced by the church even in the so-called post-modern culture.

While church attendance in Germany varies between 5 and 10 percent, we have two centres – the Catholic Forum in Dortmund and the Youth Centre in Wasserburg – where the faithful arrive quite early, for fear of not finding a place in the church for the Eucharistic celebration! I had the opportunity to participate in liturgies in both the places leading to a persistent question within: what makes people come in such large numbers here while parish churches are left mostly with just a few elderly people? Certainly there may be quite a few coming to these centres disillusioned by the institutional Church. Some may be even unreasonably critical of the values that the Church stands for. However, regardless of such concerns, the overall experience is positive and invites us to reflect seriously on our pastoral approaches to evangelisation in a more secularised world.



The liturgy itself in these centres appeared to be simple and quite faithful to the liturgical norms of the church. There was no exaggerated creativity in the liturgy which is something good in itself because, as we see at times, exaggerated words, actions and symbols only provide distractions and even entertainment. The liturgy was always carefully prepared with a lively homily based on the Word,

using language understandable to the people. There was music and singing, once again with tones and content conducive to an atmosphere of prayer and worship. There was an air of simplicity in everything. There was a more person-oriented approach, creating a spirit of community, with a great sense of openness and hospitality. There was a simple fraternal gathering for a coffee, snacks and ordinary conversations among the people. Unsurprisingly not too many were rushing back to their cars before the final blessing!

What I want to do here is not to 'idealise' this situation as though it can be disseminated across the world. Specific situations demand specific answers. However there are some values and practices which can be

relevant right across many oceans. Fidelity to the worship of the true God, ability to interpret human existential questions in the light of the Word of God, creating a sense of community with warmth in human relationships, opting for simplicity instead of being weighed down by many human structures and traditions, a readiness to return to the essentials of Christian life, etc., are factors worth reflecting on. Real openness to the Holy Spirit means looking for creative responses to the signs of the times instead of falling into a state of pessimism, delusion and even panic.

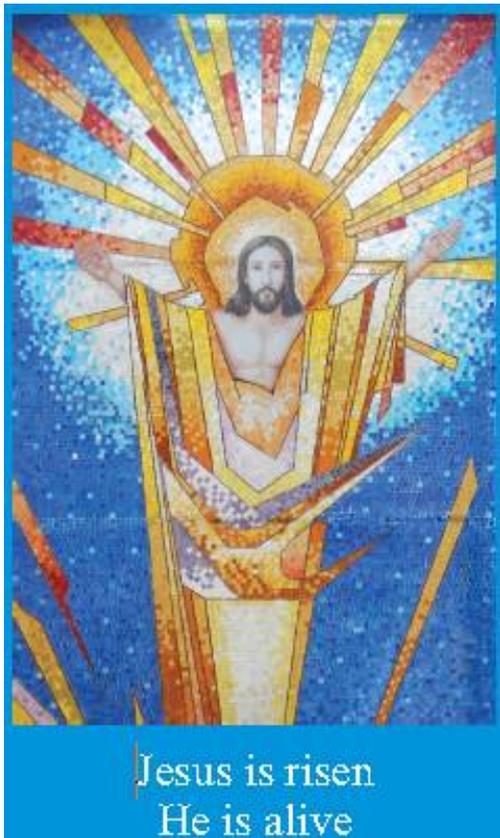


Yet another question comes to mind: Is not Pallotti's call to revive faith and rekindle charity all the more relevant in such a situation? How far have we seriously reflected on this question as one of the possible solutions to the current challenges in the church? Or has our world become so small that we remain content with the creation of a few groups of the Union with our trademark and seal? Or are we getting lost in the process of setting up structures and the organisation of a continuous chain of meetings without a clear vision and commitment to the mission of the Church? Certainly the responses to these questions will differ from person to person and country to country. An even more difficult question might be: how do we do it?

I think we can find the answers to the many questions haunting us only by living through the paschal mystery: suffering, death and resurrection. Unless we experience a certain degree of pain there will be no wish to be healed. This requires a certain consciousness of our own poverty, in genuine humility, before God. Such an experience of brokenness is the starting point of conversion. Perhaps it is time to realise that we should not consider ourselves as the fully evangelised, but as people in exodus, constantly moving towards the promised land. Only such an experience of our nothingness in the light of God's grace can enable us to die to ourselves and to the numerous idols that we have created as mere vanity. Once dead to ourselves and buried with Christ, we shall rise again in the newness of life with Him. It is the challenge of new evangelisation in its deepest sense: only the evangelised will be authentic evangelisers.

Perhaps some concrete examples will show us what it means to evangelise in a modern situation and also in a Pallottine way. We might take the example of three pastoral works of the *Heart of Jesus* Province in the city of Dortmund:

- In Dortmund South, which is the economically richer part of the city, there is the Catholic Forum aimed at adult faith formation.
- Right across the railway line, on the other side of the city, in Dortmund North, there is one confrere engaged in an apostolate of charity simply by providing food and education to poor people, especially to migrant children. The confrere himself cooks food for them; the number of volunteers is ever on the rise to help him in his mission in favour of the poor.
- Not far away, in a nearby church, is another confrere who is trying to live in the spirit of the Cenacle with hours of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and by offering spiritual guidance to those who visit this church.



All three pastoral works are interconnected spiritually, interpersonally and materially. There are also many other such pastoral expressions in the Province.

The paschal mystery is not just a theological or sociological construct. It is the mystery of salvation lived out in the real life drama by the Son of God himself. It is not something that we will acquire and realise sitting in the comfort of our rooms. Too frequently we soothe our conscience with a hundred rational explanations to justify our attitudes and behaviours in order not to dirty our hands. Unless we are crucified with Christ, we shall not experience the power of the Resurrection. St Paul says: “we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body” (2 Cor. 4, 10). The readiness to be evangelised could very well be the act of crucifixion; the reward will be that we become evangelisers who bear witness to the power of the Resurrection.

This is my wish for each other as we celebrate a holy Easter.

Wishing you all the peace of the Risen Lord.

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item 221

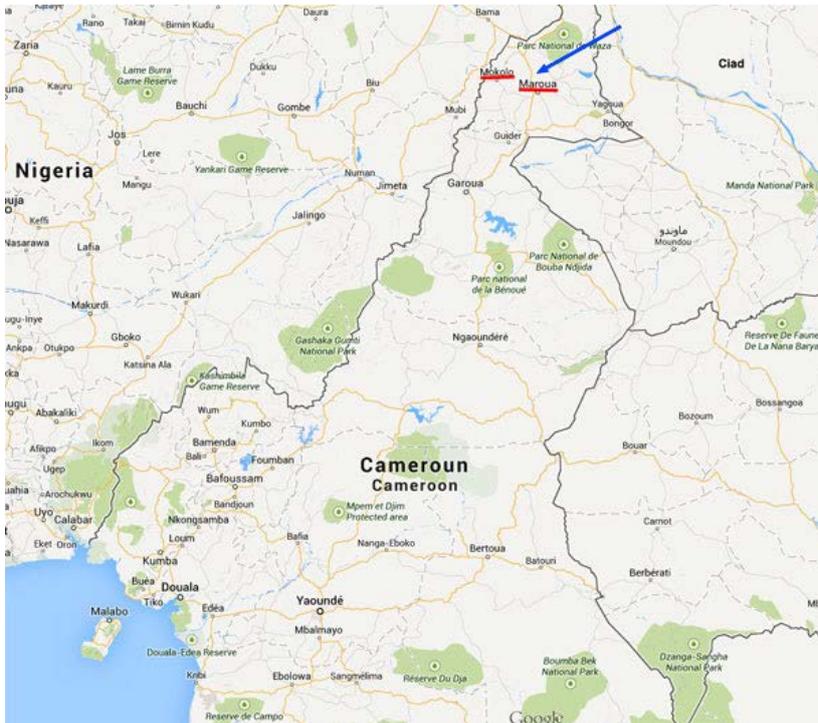
Fr Bruno Ateba SAC nominated Bishop **- diocese of Maroua-Mokolo, Cameroon**



Pope Francis, with a letter dated 3 April 2014, has nominated Fr Bruno Ateba Edo sac, Regional Rector of the Most Holy Trinity Region of Cameroon and Nigeria, Bishop of the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo, Cameroon.

Fr Bruno Ateba was born in 1964 at Zoéaté, Cameroon, made his first consecration in 1989 and was ordained priest in 1995. After his studies in Pastoral Theology in our Hochschule in Vallendar, Germany, he was appointed Rector of the Basilica of Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, Yaoundé. The new Region of the Most Holy Trinity was erected by the General Council on 5 November 2008 and Fr Bruno was elected the first Regional Rector of this Region. Currently he has been exercising his office as Regional Rector for a second term.

The year 2014 is particularly significant for the Pallottines in Cameroon since we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the death of Bishop Heinrich Vieter, founder of the Pallottine mission in Cameroon, about 125 years of the foundation of the Catholic Church in this country by the Pallottines and 50 years of the return of the German Pallottines to Cameroon. We celebrate also the 100th anniversary of the consecration of the second Pallottine Bishop in Cameroon, Msgr Franz Henemann. Hence the appointment of Fr Bruno Ateba as Bishop in Cameroon can be considered as a very special gift of the Holy Father to the Society and the entire Pallottine Family on this occasion. We remain deeply grateful to the Holy Father and wish Fr Bruno Ateba abundant blessings of God.



We are aware that the responsibility of Fr Bruno Ateba will be very challenging as we have just received news that two priests from Italy and one religious sister from Canada have been kidnapped today from the very diocese of Maroua-Mokolo. We pray for their safe return.

May Mary, Queen of Apostles, Patroness of Cameroon as well as the Union of Catholic Apostolate and our holy Founder, St Vincent Pallotti accompany and guide him in the exercise of his ministry as Bishop. We extend our hearty congratulations and prayerful good wishes to our dear confrere, Fr Bruno Ateba Edo.

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