

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

item 299

an update from Maroua-Mokolo



The region in the north of Cameroon, on the border with Nigeria and Chad, is called 'Extreme-Nord'. The capital is Maroua and has a population of 700,000.

Our Diocese numbers 70,000 baptized Christians, i.e. five Christians/km². In addition to this there are 300,000 men and women who have a friendly attitude towards us. There are 36 parishes, 7 deaneries, 75 priests, 98 religious, 12 permanent deacons and 600 catechists (male and female).

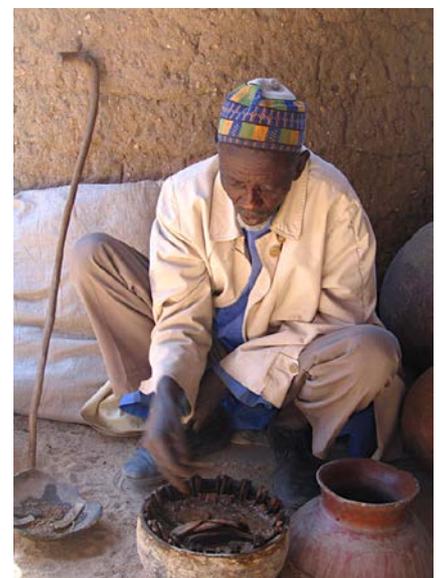
We estimate that one third of the northern population are members of African ethnic religions. Another third are Moslems and the last third Christians. Despite repeated threats by the muslim sect Boko Haram we, Christians and moslems, live together harmoniously.

At first Boko Haram seemed to be friendly and earned the confidence of the population. In that way it established itself, became well organized and is now able to force the population to cooperate. Those who refuse must flee or be killed. Just because people flee in fear and panic Boko Haram is able to control many areas – Amchide, Limani, Ashigashia and Baljuel and only since this morning Goldavi and Ngue.

The Diocese of Maroua-Makolo is part of this vast 'extreme-north' region, covering 34,263 km². It is both the poorest and the most populated amongst ten administrative districts of Cameroon, comprising 20% of the population. According to a study done by the Ministry of Trade and of the National Institute for Statistics, 18.8% of the population lived below the poverty line in 2001 and 30% in 2014.

In this area there are many who are illiterate. The state of health care is also very worrying – one hospital bed per 1,412 inhabitants and only one doctor for every 44,000 people, who on average have to travel 14 km to get to the nearest nursing station.

There are hardly any training facilities for our youth. The devastating floods of 2010 left many without a home. Boko Haram use the great needs of the population to foster their own cause. Because so many young people are unemployed they can easily attract them and so gain influence in the region. Boko Haram operates from the state of Borno in Nigeria and constantly puts the armed forces of Cameroon under pressure. Last year a number of our religious were abducted but



fortunately they were freed again. In the meantime many of our religious and diocesan priests live in very limited quarters. Some of our mission stations are not occupied which is a great worry to us. The house of the bishop unfortunately is rather small lacking certain sanitary facilities. We have to use outside toilets.

The Cameroon army is very helpful and supports us in many ways so that our missionaries can move about safely. Boko Haram still remains a great danger we have to live with.

The presence of Boko Haram at the Nigerian border is not only a serious threat but a heavy burden for the economy. Many business people have left the area. There are now hardly any business contacts. Prices for basic foodstuffs have risen as these were imported mainly from Nigeria. In the meantime the number of refugees from Nigeria has risen to 20,000. Shortly before Christmas I visited people in the refugee camp near Maroua and held a service for 4000 Christians. Our diocese tries to help where people are threatened by Boko Haram.



The most northern region of Cameroon is reputed to be the most beautiful area of Cameroon. Until recently many tourists from all over the world used to visit but the threat posed by Boko Haram has put an end to tourism there. Many hotels and guesthouses suffer as a consequence. Steppes and grasslands are typical of the area, interrupted by mountain ranges with unusual rock formations which create a picturesque landscape. Rhumski is a real magnet for tourists. Due to their modest way of life the people of our region were able to preserve their richness in

architecture, art and traditional crafts. The traditions and customs of the Foulbe, Mafa, Toupuris, Massas, Kotoko, Kirdis, Chia, Mousgoums, Mandara and Mofous are world-famous. The main attraction in the north is the Waza National Park, which is the most popular and best known of all the national parks of Cameroon and the French-speaking part of Africa. After repeated attacks by Boko Haram this is now a very dangerous region. We Christians and Muslims hope that – with God’s mercy – there will be peace again soon.

Let me now tell you a nice story for the year 2015 about **Four Candles**:

There were four candles burning on the Advent Wreath; outside it was very quiet. So quiet that you could hear the candles talk to each other.

The first candle said with a sigh: “My name is PEACE. My light gives safety, but people don’t keep peace. They don’t want me.’ The candle’s light grew smaller and smaller until it went out altogether.

The second candle flickered and said: “My name is FAITH. But I feel superfluous. People don’t believe in anything anymore. It is needless for me to give light. A breeze came through the room and the candle’s light went out.

Quietly and hesitatingly the third candle started to talk: “My name is LOVE. I lost all my strength because people became so selfish. They only see themselves and are not prepared to make each other happy.” And with a last flicker this light went out too.

Then a Child came into the room and said in surprise looking at the candles: “but you should all be burning!” The fourth candle now spoke up: “Have no fear because as long as I keep burning we can always start up the other candles again. My name is HOPE.”

The child took a match to this candle, lit it and brought PEACE, FAITH and LOVE to life again.



So let's be witnesses of Hope. Greetings from far away!

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item 300

first international meeting of Pallottine Lay Communities

We give thanks to God for all the gifts received at this first international meeting of **Pallottine Lay Communities**: love, joy, peace, benevolence, goodness, faithfulness (Gal 5:22).

Gathered in Grottaferrata, Rome, from January 2nd to 6th 2015, we represented the **Mariana Community** – Australia, **Khristsevikas** – India, **Comunità della Quinta Dimensione** – Italy and the **Instituto Secular do Apostolado Católico** – Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina. Persons who become members of our Communities are admitted *automatically* to the Union.

The genesis of this gathering dates back to 2012 when Fr Jacob Nampudakam SAC, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Union, invited Lay Communities of the Union, such as ours, to come together. The theme of the gathering was “Look at how they love one another” (Tertullian), and the aims were:

- to know each other;
- to acknowledge our unique identity in the Union;
- to strengthen our bonds in the Union;
- to deepen our life-long apostolic commitment as members of interlinked yet autonomous communities.



We reflected in depth on our common origin in the Pallottine charism and we rejoiced in recognizing our common memory. In response to our baptismal call we have been led to a life-time commitment and are convinced of our vocation to follow Jesus Christ in our secular community way of life.

In these three days we examined the nature of the charism entrusted to us, both individually and as communities, we rejoiced to see that the motivation which underpins our life is our daily encounter with the living God which reinforces our apostolic spirit as Pallottines.

In the light of Pope Francis's urgent call to "Maintain the freshness of your charism; respect the freedom of each person; and, always strive for communion" (address to Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, November 2014); we embark on this path rekindling our 'first love' and joyfully meeting the needs of our time in dedicated service to the mission of the Union.

In our common prayer and celebrations of the Eucharist we have given heart-felt thanks to God for all the members of the Pallottine Family and all our service to the Church. We take with us a renewed spirit of communion, and in union with each vocation and way of life in the Union, we hope to break new ground in bringing the joy of the Gospel to ...∞

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SAC asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #156 The commitment of those German (and other) missionaries to such a different country and culture as ours, particularly the First Australians, never ceases to amaze me. I know it wasn't all sweetness and light for anyone concerned, but at a time when most Australians of European ancestry didn't seem to give much of a passing thought to Aboriginal people, the devotion of Fr. Kriener, and others, to them is remarkable and sobering for the rest of us.

MB 25.01.15

The article of Fr. Frank Donio on "*Pallottine consecrated life and vocation promotion*" gives an apt reply to all those who are looking for an answer to the difficult task of finding new vocations to our communities, especially from the Western countries.

There is no quick solution to the problem but, as the article shows, it requires a long-term project of prayer for vocations, personal accompaniment and formation in the spirituality and charism of the Founder. Community life and even religious habits play a vital role in this process.

We must also go beyond the narrow view of vocation promotion as "recruiting" candidates to our religious communities. What is important is to help the young people, first of all, to find the Lord and live Christian discipleship and then help them to discern and choose their vocation and live it joyfully and freely. We must not also shy away from speaking about consecrated life and the beauty of priestly ministry as viable options of life.

So I hope that, instead of becoming despondent and desperate, we all engage in the apostolate of forming apostles, as St. Vincent wished, especially among the Youth, and give new life to the Church and, eventually also to the entire Union and all its components.

JN 25.01.15