



## **VIA LATINA 22**

**# 334 - September-October 2024**

News from the General Administration of the Society of Mary

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## First vows in the District of Ivory Coast and the Sector of Congo



**Brothers Bob Clément Ilonga, Donatien Kalonga and Dorian Gogui  
with the celebrants.**

On Saturday, June 29, 2024 at the Marianist Novitiate Notre Dame del Pilar, in Abidjan, the Society of Mary and the entire Marianist family of Ivory Coast had the great joy of celebrating the first religious profession of Brothers Bob Clément Ilonga and Donatien Kalonga from the Sector of Congo, and Dorian Gogui from the Ivory Coast.

The Mass which began at 10:30 a.m. was presided over by Father Jean-Louis Barré, current Director of the Spiritual Center Village Chaminade. Other concelebrants were the Superior of the District of Ivory Coast, Father Noël Dominique Kouao, delegate of the Regional Superior of France to receive the Vows, and other fellow Marianist and diocesan priests. In addition, we also welcomed the novices' parents, several religious communities and some members of the Marianist family.

The festivities ended with a fraternal meal shared within the Novitiate community.

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## First Vows in the Region of Togo

On Saturday, June 29, 2024, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the Society of Mary with the entire Marianist Family had the joy of celebrating in Kara the profession of the first vows of three young Togolese: Benjamin A Agbenyegan, Gerson M. Assih and Mattieu M. Lohou. They finished their time of initial formation in religious life at the Marianist Novitiate of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire.

This celebration took place in the large Amphi Schenker hall of the Chaminade College in Kara. In addition to the Marianist Family, it brought together relatives and friends of the professed, students, pastors and faithful of their respective parishes, staff and students of Marianist schools.



**Brothers Benjamin A. Agbenyegan, Gerson M. Assih and Matthieu M. E. Lahou with the celebrants and confreres.**

The ceremony was very beautiful with the performance of songs and dances, in thanksgiving for the welcome of our three brothers as Marianist religious in the Society of Mary. Beginning at 9:00 a.m. and presided over by Fr. Jonas Kpatcha, S.M., Regional Superior of Togo who received the vows of the professed, the ceremony ended around noon with a fraternal meal in a festive atmosphere.

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## First Vows in the Region of Eastern Africa

The Region of Eastern Africa had the great joy of celebrating the First Profession of Vows of Godwin Nyongesa Wanjala, S.M., on August 10, 2024. This event marked a crucial step in Brother Godwin's journey as a Marianist, making more explicit his commitment to God and the Society of Mary. The profession took place in the novitiate chapel of the Annunciation in Limuru, Kenya, just outside the capital of Nairobi. Fr Joseph Kahiro Mwaura, the Novice Director, presented Brother Godwin as a suitable candidate for the profession of vows after two years of preparation, formation, and discernment. Fr. Stephen Wanyoike Mburu, S.M., Regional Superior, was the homilist and received the vows.



**L-R: Fr. Gabriel Kirangah, SM; Fr. Joseph Mwaura, SM; Bro. Godwin with his parents; Fr. Stephen Mburu, SM; Fr. Michael Ochieng', SM and Fr. Stephen Wafula, vicar of the parish of Bro. Godwin.**

The Novitiate Community, including the newly arrived first year novices, and members of the Region were present to welcome this newest member. Brother Godwin was supported by members of his family; he is one of 25 siblings, some of whom were able to be present along with his mother Florence and his father Pius. His assistant parish priest, Fr. Stephen Wafula and a few parishioners were



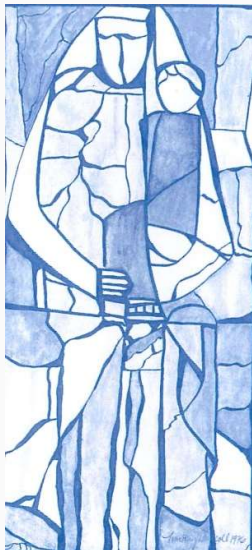
also present. Members of the Marianist Lay Community, friends, and other religious joined in the celebration. The Little Sisters of Saint Joseph supported their fellow novice by leading the singing. The children from the Nest Children's Home in Limuru, where Brother Godwin ministered, joined in the celebration. The ceremony was also live-streamed so Marianist family members and friends worldwide could witness his first profession. Of course, the celebration continued with lunch, the cutting of the cake, and congratulatory speeches.

Brother Godwin began his spiritual year at Tangaza University before fully pursuing his professional training at the same University.

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## First Vows in the Province de Meribah

On Sunday, August 18, 2024, Bro. Michael Duffy, S.M. professed his first vows as a Marianist in the Province of Meribah at a Mass before family, friends, and Brothers. Brothers from the USA Province Fr. Oscar Vasquez (Provincial) and Bro. Jesse O'Neill (Assistant for Education) were presents to the ceremony.



For his memorial prayer card, Bro. Michael selected a stained-glass image of our Blessed Mother holding the child Jesus, located in the Chapel of the Assumption at Chaminade High School, where the Mass for his profession of vows took place. The printed image came from a drawing made by Bro. Timothy Driscoll, S.M. During his Novitiate, Bro. Michael spent much time in prayer sitting across from this mosaic in the chapel. During remarks at the reception, Bro. Michael said, "It inspired my vocation as a Marianist, to dedicate my life to making Mary known, loved, and served."

He added that a fellow Brother once explained that the abstract nature of the image is meant to inspire the viewer's imagination, a theme Bro. Michael hopes will always inspire his spiritual life. Connected to this image, Bro. Michael chose the first words of Mary's *Magnificat* -- "My soul glorifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46) -- seeing in her song of praise many echoes of his own vocational journey.



**L-R: Fr. Peter Heiskell, S.M., Bro. Michael Duffy, S.M. and Bro. Joseph Bellizzi, S.M.**

During the Rite of First Profession of Vows, Novice Master Rev. Peter Heiskell, S.M. presented the candidate for profession to Provincial Superior Bro. Joseph Bellizzi, S.M.

Bro. Joseph had introduced the Mass, saying, "This is indeed a very joyous and significant day in the life of Bro. Michael, the Province of Meribah, and the Society of Mary." He continued, "Michael is a graduate of Kellenberg Memorial High School, an apostolate of the Province of Meribah. It is always touching to have a Son of Mary pledge his commitment and fidelity to Mary through his profession of vows today." He concluded, "As our *Rule of Life* states: 'we become members of the Society that belongs to Mary and thus dedicate ourselves to her.'" The joy of the entire celebration is best captured by the words of Mary herself, "My soul glorifies the Lord!"

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## Celebration of Perpetual Vows in the Region of Togo

On Saturday, August 31, 2024, Brother Alban Wilson-Bahun professed his perpetual vows in the Society of Mary during a solemn celebration in the Parish of the Holy Spirit of Totsi, in Lomé, the parish of origin of the professed. The celebration began at 9:00 a.m. and was presided over by the Regional Superior, Fr. Jonas Kpatcha, who also received the final commitment from Brother Alban.

Brother Alban Wilson-Bahun is a member of the Blessed Chaminade Community of Kara. He was born on June 22, 1993. He entered the Marianist Prenovitiate of Notre Dame du Oui in Kara in 2016. He continued his Marianist formation at the Novitiate in Abidjan from 2017 to 2019. He professed his first vows on June 23, 2019. Since 2021, he has been a mathematics teacher and accountant at the Chaminade College in Kara.



Fr. Jonas talked about the meaning of consecration for a Marianist, which consists in becoming another Son of Mary, another Jesus, in the words of the founder, Blessed Chaminade. He developed his homily around four points, explaining the attitudes a religious must have in order to achieve this conformity

to Christ. It is essentially a question of developing human attitudes, of entering into a dynamic personal relationship with the Lord, of following the demands of one's own vocation through the practice of the evangelical counsels and finally of going to the school of the Virgin Mary (following her advice and imitating her).

This beautiful celebration of perpetual vows brought together the entire Marianist Family, the parents and friends of the professed, the staff and students of the Marianist schools in Togo, parishioners and guests of the Marianists. After three hours of liturgical celebration, a fraternal meal was offered in the Marianist community of Blessed Jakob Gapp in Lomé.

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## World Day of Marianist Prayer

Located in Abidjan, the economic capital of Ivory Coast, a country in West Africa, and precisely at Cité Fairmont in the commune of Attécoubé, the Marian Shrine of Our Lady of Africa, Mother of All Graces is a place of prayer, spirituality and pilgrimage. This sacred site welcomes pilgrims (around 4,000 a week) of all faiths. They come not only to strengthen and deepen their faith in God through the Virgin Mary, but also to discover and visit this architectural work of art. Welcoming all these people is a real challenge for the brothers of the Marianist community responsible for the Sanctuary. Our brothers place particular emphasis on welcoming pilgrims as part of our Pastoral Care program.





In 1980, during his first visit to Ivory Coast, Pope John Paul II blessed the first stone. That first stone was laid on February 2, 1985. Two years later, on February 1, 1987, the Marian Shrine was inaugurated by Cardinal Bernard Yago.

This is the sanctuary where on October 13th all the members of our Family will unite spiritually to celebrate the World Day of Marianist Prayer. A place where Cardinal Bernard Yago said he wished "that the multitudes would come to strengthen and deepen their faith in this high place."

We invite you to join in this prayer!

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## Carlo Acutis & Faustino Parallel lives?



"To be always united to Jesus; this is my program of life." With these few words, Carlo Acutis expressed the motto of his brief existence. Born in May 1991 in London to Italian parents, his parents returned to Milan in September. In September 1997, primary school began; in June 1998 he received his First Communion and in May 2003 the sacrament of confirmation.

In September 2005 he began the baccalaureate (Classical Lyceum) at the Leo XIII Institute, of the Jesuit Fathers. However, at the beginning of October of the 2006-2007 academic year he fell ill with a very serious leukemia that would cause his death. He died a few days later, on October 12. By his will he was buried in the cemetery of Assisi.

On October 12, 2012, the cause of beatification and canonization was opened. His Cause, like the sanctity of his life, has been meteoric: He was declared venerable on July 5, 2018. On October 10, 2020, he was beatified in Assisi. He will now be canonized by Pope Francis during the jubilee year.

In just 16 years, Carlo Acutis developed an intense apostolate among young people, using his knowledge of computer science. Apostle of the Eucharist, of prayer, of the recitation of the Rosary, he reminds us of our beloved Faustino Pérez-Manglano, already venerable. Faustino, who was only 16 years old (1947-1963), also walked an intense path of spiritual life, giving a great witness of faith. There is a strong harmony between the two, as Carlo Acutis had photos of the venerable Faustino and a brief historical review of his life on his blog.



Carlo and Faustino were followers of Jesus. For them, Jesus was the meaning of their lives. Both professed a great devotion to the Eucharist. Their love for the Virgin Mary was great, as shown by their daily recitation of the Rosary. The concern of both to help the poor is well-documented. Eventually, the two faced the suffering caused by disease and died very young from cancer. They were very simple and friendly young men. They were also very fond of soccer!

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## How can we be a synodal Church in mission?

This is the theme of the second synodal session that will open in Rome on October 2 and end on the 27th of the same month. This is a vital question for the whole Church, for all religious, and for the Marianist Family and the Society of Mary. It is in this precise context that the reflection of our XXXVI General Chapter and its implementation over the next six years is taking place. Entering into this reflection is therefore absolutely fundamental for us: whatever our other subjects of concern, it is on this ground that they are called upon to find an answer.

[The Instrumentum Laboris](#) (*the Working Document*) for this second session was published on July 9. It recalls the journey already made since the launch of the process in 2021, with the consultations, the national and continental phases, the first session of the synod (October 2023) and the work in progress on ten themes that have already emerged from this session.



The Document also invites us (1-21) to make a new synthesis of our understanding of synodality. How is it understood, accepted and lived by the people of God? When it calls for a reinforced responsibility of all the baptized and for a new missionary impulse sustained by the desire for a universal fraternity lived within her and shared with all, is this welcomed?

The *Instrumentum Laboris* presents three areas for our reflection.

1. **Relationships** (22-50) invites us to reflect on the links that unite the various charisms and ministries in the Church and the Church in the world. The exchange of gifts, dialogue, collaboration and communion among all bring life to life. Authentic and living relationships are the basis of a synodal Church.
2. **Journey** (51-79). This can be achieved by journeying together, in formation, in discernment, through decision-making processes and by reporting with transparency. How can we walk as a diverse but united people?
3. **Places** (80-108). The Church lives and carries out her mission in a large number of places, diverse from a geographical, cultural, social, generational point of view, etc. Diversity that generates richness and dynamic relationships.

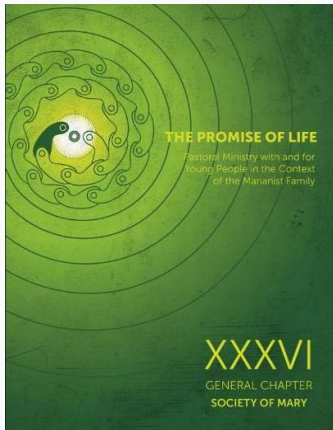
Let us conclude with the penultimate paragraph of the document: *The questions that the [Synod] asks are: how to be a synodal Church in mission; how to engage in deep listening and dialogue; how to be co-responsible in the light of the dynamism of our personal and communal baptismal vocation; how to transform structures and processes so that all may participate and share the charisms that the Spirit pours out on each for the common good; how to exercise power and authority as service. Each of these questions is a service to the Church and through its action, to the possibility of healing the deepest wounds of our time. (IL #111)*

The Superiors and Superiors General shared the [contribution of Consecrated Life](#)

Marianist religious, we will all be keen to listen to the Spirit who will speak to us through this Synod.

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## Document of the XXXVI General Chapter



On September 2nd, we received, by mail, the document of the XXXVI General Chapter. May it be for us a *Promise of life*! Let us welcome it, meditate on it, share it in community and in our Units. May it bring new life with and for the young people! Happy reading!

To read the document click [HERE](#)

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### Addresses of the new members of the General Council

**Please note the addresses of the new members of the General Council:**

- Brother Dennis Bautista, Assistant General for Education: [geneduc@smcuria.it](mailto:geneduc@smcuria.it)
- Brother A. Jérôme Balakiyema, Assistant General for Temporalities: [gentemp@smcuria.it](mailto:gentemp@smcuria.it)

**Other members of the General Council (no change of address):**

- Father André-Joseph Fétis, Superior General: [gensupsm15@smcuria.it](mailto:gensupsm15@smcuria.it)
- Father Pablo Rambaud, Assistant General for Religious Life: [genrelsm18@smcuria.it](mailto:genrelsm18@smcuria.it)
- Brother José Ignacio Iglesia, General Secretary: [gensecsm@smcuria.it](mailto:gensecsm@smcuria.it)

As the addresses of brothers Dennis and Jérôme are new, please include the change in your address book.





### Prayer Intention to Blessed Chaminade

The Marianist community of the Chapel of La Madeleine in Bordeaux asks us for a novena of prayer to Blessed Chaminade for the healing of **Father Robert Witwicki, S.M.** Father Robert suffers from a brain tumor that was in the regression phase, but the latest MRI revealed that the tumor has started to reactivate.

## G.A. Communications recently sent

- **Death Notices: # 10-15**
- **Sept. 2 : *Final Document of the XXXVI General Chapter***, in three languages, to all the religious of the Society of Mary
- **Sept. 9 : *Marianist World Day of Prayer - October 13, 2024***, in three languages, to all the Marianist Family, sent by the World Council of the Marianist Family .
- **Sept. 11 : *Marianist Solidarity Fund (MSF) and Marianist Formation Fund (MFF) 2025***, in three languages, sent to Assistants for Temporalities and Unit Leaders, from the Assistant General for Temporalities, Bro. Jérôme Balakiyema, S.M..

## G.A. Calendar

- **Oct. 11-13:** World Council of the Marianist Family in Rome.

## Changes of addresses

- **Bro. Michael McAward (ME):** [bromcaward@kellenberg.org](mailto:bromcaward@kellenberg.org)
- **Bro. Maximin Magnan (TO):** [maxenusa@yahoo.com](mailto:maxenusa@yahoo.com)