April 4, 2016

PATRONAL FEAST 2016
OF THE MARIANIST FAMILY
ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

LET US BE WITNESSES OF THE GOOD NEWS

Lord God, our Father,
You have sent us Jesus, your Son, as our Savior.
He is your Gospel, your living Word, addressed to all
To tell the Good News of your love.
Let all men, women, youth and children of our times,
Accept the Gospel of peace,
Each in his own language, his own homeland, and his own culture,
Each one with respect for his freedom.
Bless and protect those who give their time and their lives
For the spread of the Gospel.
May your Holy Spirit make of us, as Church,
The witnesses of your Good News,
Here and at the ends of the Earth. Amen

PROPOSALS FOR A TIME OF PRAYER

Refrain (before and after the Word): You call us to love you in loving
The world to which you send us
O faithful God, give us, as we love
The world, to love you alone.

READING OF THE WORD (Jn 4:28-30; Acts 2:14-20)

PRAYER TO MARY: Mary, with you we wish to be Good News!

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You were the witness of the Good News
First in saying your “yes” to the unexpected from God.
With you, we wish to witness to the joy of serving!
Hail, Mary...
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You were the witness of the Good News
As you went to sing it to your cousin.
Help us to sing the wonders of God in our lives.
Hail Mary...

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You were a witness to the Good News
In accepting to accompany us as our Mother.
With you we wish to witness to the life of the Risen One!
Hail Mary...

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You received the Living Waters flowing from the open heart of our Son.
Let us, like you, welcome that living water
In order to be the Good News for a new world!
Hail Mary...

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION . . .

O Lord, our God, in order to save us all and bring us to yourself, you sent your Beloved Son who was made man in being born of the Virgin Mary.
Grant that we may be formed by her into the image of her first-born Son and help us to share in the love of Christ for his Mother.
You have associated Mary to the mystery of your Son so that she might be the New Eve, the Mother of the living.
Confirm the Alliance that we have contracted with her. May our dedicated service prolong on earth her maternal charity and make grow the Church, the body of your Son Jesus, the Christ, our Lord. Amen.

TÉMOIGNAGES :

TESTIMONIES:

Story of a vocation: Bro. Kouakou Elie Oka, SM
My name is Kouakou Elie Oka. I was born on Thursday, April 5, 1984, in the Lebanese maternity hospital of Treichville, Abidjan, Ivory Coast. My father’s name was N’Guessan Étienne Oka and my mother’s Amoin Jeanne N’Goh. I have two brothers and a sister still living. I spent my childhood alone with my mother, and it was at her side that I learned to discover Christ through his Mother, the Virgin Mary. In fact, my mother is devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She belongs to the Legion of Mary. With my mother, also, I made pilgrimages to various Marian shrines, including the national Marian shrine of Our Lady of Africa, Mother of all Graces. But it was through my baptismal godfather, Fr. Gautier Somé, that I first encountered the Society of Mary and the Marianists.
This vocation story first began during the summer vacation of 1998, after a training camp of the Youth Movement for Service at the Altar (altar servers), in which I had participated and which took place at the collège Monseigneur René Kouassi of Dabou. I was finishing the C Class at the Lycée Moderne (senior high school) of Port-Bouët. After the camp, I wanted to become a priest. After a while, and with no follow-up, I ended by abandoning that idea in order to concentrate on my studies. Thus, even if the desire resurfaced occasionally, I gave myself plenty of arguments to convince me that I should not follow that road. Nevertheless, in 2005, when I was in the first year

1 In the general cursus toward baccalaureate, it is the end of the high school years. “C” means that is a scientific way.
(Deug I)² of Natural Sciences at the University of Abobo-Adjamé, the need to consecrate myself to God became stronger. This time the desire was not necessarily to become a priest, but to commit myself to the religious life. I spoke with my godfather, who suggested that I participate in an Easter camp that was going to be organized a bit later. The experience at that camp once more boosted my desire to commit myself. In fact, the shared fellowship and joy, the simplicity and attention, as well as the family spirit that reigned throughout the camp, responded exactly to what I was looking for. When I shared this with my family, the paradox was that my Christian mother at first refused to accept my decision, while my father, who doesn’t go to church, accepted it on the spot. I am the oldest child of my father, who had only two, and the sixth child of my mother, who had seven. It was only after four years as an aspirant that I finally got to the labor camp in August 2008, before entering the Pre-Novitiate at Notre Dame de Bietry during the academic year of 2008-2009. Three of us were admitted, but only two responded to the call, Agoou Narcisse Anoman and I. Nevertheless, I made my first religious profession of vows alone on Saturday, June 25, 2011, in the parish church of St. Bernard d’Adiopodoumé, after two years in the sacred wood of the novitiate with my brothers-classmates Dedeten Lucien Gnakou and Hola Justin Agbo. I bless the Lord through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for what I am today, and I pray for all the persons whom He set along the route of my vocation.

Some members (from different countries) of the Alliance Mariale bear witness:

Certainty about God's unconditional love for me awakened in my heart the desire to consecrate myself to him, to consecrate my entire life to serve him in my brothers and sisters. With my doubts and fears, I nevertheless decided to follow him, conscious of my weaknesses, but fully assured and confident in his grace. In fact, I know that when it is he who calls us, at the same time he gives us all that we need in order to accomplish his will. The profession of the vows of chastity and of obedience have given me a great freedom and strength in the environment where I have grown as a lay person. I see my profession as a pediatrician as a service, as the care for people's health and for life as a gift from God. I feel free of financial worries, free from the unhealthy competition that sometimes exists between colleagues, free of a scientistic medicine without ethics. In interpersonal relationships, I clearly feel that freedom to love everyone without exception, under the eye of the Lord, with an unconditional love that expects nothing in return.

My commitment brings me community, fraternity. In spite of our geographical dispersion, we are united in various ways: spiritually through prayer, through letters, through our Lien international bulletin, a means of communication for exchanging thoughts on our life and our faith.

In addition, as a Marianist, I feel that it is a blessing to belong to this beautiful family of Mary. Our Mother is the best of mothers, she is protection, she is counsel, she gives us Jesus, who is the way, the truth, the life; she makes us docile to the action of the Holy Spirit.

I thank God and Mary for their marvelous give of this vocation.

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² First year at University, just after the baccalaureate.
For me it is a great joy to be a part of the great family of consecrated persons. When we have our meetings, or when we remember our Founders or when we assemble for prayer, when I hear news of the other branches, I say: “What a marvel God has wrought!” When I am alone with my Breviary, after have prayed I experience an interior and outer joy. I would like for all the world to experience the encounter with God. In living the vows, I feel free and happy at being consecrated.

The wonder of the discovery and of the first steps along the path which leads to the vocation of a consecrated lay woman in the Marianist Family is shown in her joy at serving. I have a very strong experience of the Lord's invitation to live like Him and with Him, as spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles: “. . . he who went through the world doing good.”

I have the conviction that the Lord calls us to go along, with simplicity and humility, doing good in our activities, in all the contexts in which we find ourselves. I experience the need, in the most urgent way, to pray for the world, for those who suffer, to be up to date on what is going on, to have an opinion and to join causes that involve solidarity and love.

I am very grateful to the Lord for his love and for his call to follow him, with a heart open and available, and “full of names,” as Bishop Helder Camara put it.
LET US PRAY WITH THE FOUNDERS

For the Marianist Family

“Come out of your retreat with the zeal and the courage of Peter; go cast your nets of divine love in all the places where Providence will send you.” (Mother Adèle)

- Mary shows us him who is at the center of her faith and who must become the center of our life.

Through Mary, may all the Marianist Family of all countries and continents recount with their words and with the richness of their culture, the insight of Fr. William Joseph Chaminade.

For the Society of Mary (SM)

“Let us not count upon ourselves, but upon the grace of the Holy Spirit who, from the timid and weak men that the Apostles were, made them strong and courageous.” (Mother Adèle)

- Mary, you know how to give him whom your heart loves. You have understood that your mission is for all and draws people to follow you.
- Teach your children, priests and brothers, to live like Christ, to give all without counting so that a world of brothers and sisters might come. Help them to conform their hearts to that of your Son, so that they might offer to the world the image of his love.

For the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (FMI)

“We must have the apostolic Spirit, must make our heavenly spouse known and loved, be it to the ends of the world.” (Mother Adèle)

- Mary, you know how to see what no one else takes notice of as at Cana, and you invite us to trust.
- Teach your daughters to pay attention to the daily little things that make others grow, because they are recognized and loved.

For the Alliance Mariale (AM)

“Imagine yourselves to be among the pagans with the Missionaries who work untiringly to win hearts to Jesus Christ, to make him known and to make him loved.” (Mother Adèle)

- Mary, you know how to be “the first on the road” because you know he is the First-born, he who has left the tomb empty.
- Teach the members of the Alliance Mariale to seek out their roads to Galilee where he will meet them.
For the Marianist Lay Communities (MLC)

“To each one of us, the Blessed Virgin Mary has given a mandate to work at the salvation of our brothers and sisters in this world.” (Fr. Chaminade)

The world is shaken by all kinds of sufferings and our faith is lived out in sorrow.

- Mary, let the joy of believing shine out through the life of all Christians, and give them all the humility to witness to a calm peace.

**Let us pray:**

Holy Mary, Mother of God,
You have given to the world the true light,
Jesus, your son, the Son of God.
You gave yourself in complete abandonment to God’s call
And you thus became the font of the goodness
which springs forth from Him.
Show us Jesus.
Guide us to Him.
Teach us to know him and to love him,
So that we might be able,
We too, to become capable of a true love
And to be a spring of living water
In the midst of a thirsty world.

(document prepared by the members of the Alliance Mariale of the Ivory Coast)