



Vincentian Solidarity Office

March 2017 Bulletin



Growing the Mission in Lombe

Five years ago this month, our Congregation started a mission in Angola. Getting the mission established has been a challenge. Angola is a troubled place. It only recently gained its independence in 1975. A 25-year civil war quickly followed, killing up to 1.5 million residents and displacing 4 million others. Like other African nations, Angola has lots of oil—a resource that promised socioeconomic development, but instead has led to great economic inequality, corruption, and lost opportunity for human progress.



A majority of Angolans live on less than two US dollars a day. Life expectancy at birth in the country is only 51 years. Infant mortality is high. Access to potable water and electricity is limited in rural areas—as is schooling for children.

Our mission in Angola is located in the town of Lombe, outside the city of Malange. The mission serves 40 communities,

some as far as 40 kilometers away from the mission center. The VSO first assisted the mission by sending monies for our confreres there to purchase a vehicle to traverse the challenging roads. Recently, the VSO provided funding to help our



confreres in Angola start a large vegetable garden and orchard, and build a wall to protect them from animals. (Monies sent by the VSO to Angola have come from private donations.) In this article we display some pictures of the construction of the wall, and the new garden.



Produce from the garden and orchard will be used to feed children at the mission school, catechists, and hungry people in surrounding communities.

Some will also be sold at market by women to make income for their families. Selling of some produce will also help the mission move toward financial independence. Our confreres will also eat from the garden and orchard. They will need to. The parishioners are mostly impoverished, the local diocese has little money to share, and it is difficult for our Congregation to even get funding into the country!



A closer look at the pictures in this article reveals something else growing in the garden and orchard in Lombe: the mission superior. He is a good man from Brazil, becoming an even better man by working along and sharing the garden and orchard with the people he ministers to. He has dedicated his life to the Gospel, but by living simply among impoverished Angolans in Lombe, he increasingly understands the value of doing so. This “mutual evangelization” can be seen in our missionaries working in other troubled places in the world. It is the fruit from seeds planted by St. Vincent De Paul 400 years ago--by which so many poor people, and those who serve and stand in solidarity with them--are deeply nourished today.

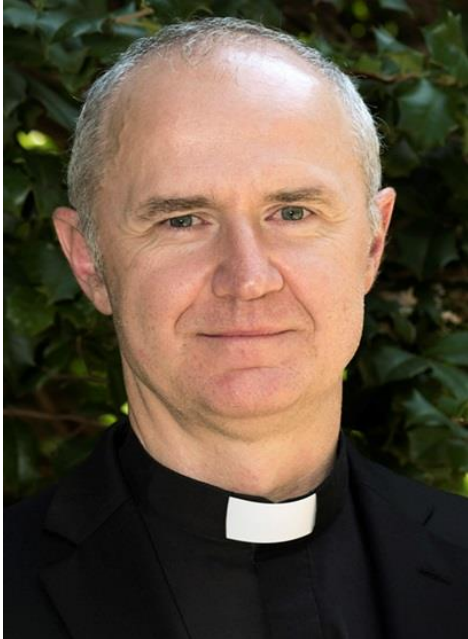
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The VSO Welcomes Fr. Gregory

We are happy to share the news that Fr. Gregory Semeniuk, C.M. has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the VSO.



Fr. Gregory is from the Eastern USA Province. Before coming to the VSO, he was serving as Vicar for Multicultural Ministries at the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. (Fr. Gregory speaks four languages.) Earlier in his priesthood and for ten years, he served in Hispanic Ministry in New York. Fr. Semeniuk also previously taught theology in the major seminary of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Fr. Gregory resides at the Theologate house of the Eastern Province, where he also serves as a part-time formator.

A Hostel in Oraifite

For some years, our confreres in Nigeria have operated St. Joseph's Primary School and De Paul Secondary School in Oraifite. These are special schools because they serve children who are deaf or have severe hearing impairments. Such children lack adequate access to schooling in Nigeria. But these two schools are also special in another way; they teach students with full hearing in classrooms alongside children who cannot hear. Such "inclusive" education is also uncommon in Nigeria. This is unfortunate, because teaching children who have disabilities together with children who do not, helps the learning of all of them. It also encourages respect and understanding, and a more just treatment of people with disabilities in Nigerian society.

Many of the children at St. Joseph's and De Paul live far away and need to board at the schools. Our confreres in Oraifite decided to further integrate the children that have disabilities with those who don't at the schools, by having them live together. They needed to construct a new hostel in order to do this.



The new inclusive school hostel and its students

The VSO assisted our Province of Nigeria in obtaining grant monies from Kindermissionswerk and the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart, which it matched with monies from the Vincentian Solidarity Fund, to pay for the construction of the ground floor of the new hostel. At this time 99 students, including those with and without hearing, live together in the hostel. The VSO is now working to finance the construction a second floor to house more of the students.

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Our goal: To assist the Congregation of the Mission with obtaining funds for its evangelization and service of the poor.

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