

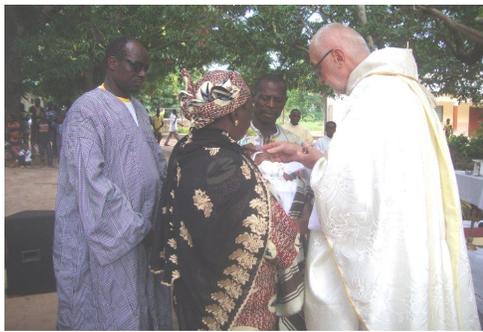


Vincentian Solidarity Office

October 2019 Bulletin

What Kind of House Can You Build for Me? Biro, Benin

King David longed to build a 'house' for the Lord in Jerusalem. God inquired of David, "What kind of house can you build for me?" As the spiritual leaders of the Parish of St.



Christmas Mass Outdoors, Couple with Fr. Stanislaw Deszcz, C.M., Pastor (2017)

John the Baptist

in Biro, Benin, the missionaries posed the question about God's dwelling since their arrival. They were in a unique position to respond to God's desire to dwell among his people. It took years



Superior General visits the Construction sight, Nov. 2018. From left: Fr. Paul Jakób, Fr. Jacob Hiler, Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, Fr. Stanislas Deszcz

of preparation to answer the question of an actual building for God's dwelling. They first confirmed the presence of God in the people themselves by love, instruction, care for the poor, primary education, and worship.

Eventually the missionaries responded to growing numbers of faithful by constructing a new parish church. The Parish of Saint John the Baptist in Biro, Benin, was established in 2002 and is part of the Diocese of N'Dali. The Congregation of the Mission began its new mission in Benin in 2012 at the request of the bishop of the Diocese of

N'Dali. The addition of the Vincentian priests relieved a serious shortage of priests, restoring priestly ministry at the Parish of Saint Jean Baptiste, which contains 16 village communities.

In a short span of five years, the number of members is projected to double to 650.

The parish used a small chapel for its liturgical, pastoral, and social service activities. On Christmas and Easter however, due to space limitations the priest and faithful had to gather under the hot sun to celebrate the Mass and Sacraments. Things needed to change for the parish to continue to fully participate in worship as one community, under one roof.

With the help of the VSO and other donors, the parish completed a 650-person 'house' for God in Biro—a milestone for this vibrant Catholic Community. On September 27th, the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, the pastor, Fr. Stanislaw Deszcz, C.M. led the faithful in the first Mass in the new parish church. In the worshipping Assembly, both priests and the faithful confirmed God's request to dwell among his people of Biro, Benin.



Raising the Supports for the Roof



First Mass in New Church, Solemnity of St. Vincent de Paul

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Equipment for Computer Training Center, Mbandaka, Congo

In the city of Mbandaka, Congo, the Vincentian missionaries work with a population where few have access to basic technology, for example, a computer and internet. In fact, 90% of the local population is technologically illiterate. The Congolese Vincentians understand that access to computers and training in technology is a practical means to help lift people out of poverty. With the assistance of the VSO and our donors, the missionaries rehabbed an existing parish building, and created a computer training center with furnishings, laptops, and wireless routers. The center offers technical training in computer use and programs.

The project aims to create future computer trainers from among those who presently seek training at the center. The hope is that the center will also increase the computer literacy of the community and provide the youth skills for future employment. The income generation model for the center assures the sustainability of the project for years to come. For example, users of the center are charged a modest fee for computer access and training. Also, the local Vincentian treasurer works with the management team to monitor the project and assure its proper functioning.



Computer center, furniture and laptops

Bus for COVIAM Theologate, Enugu, Nigeria

The dream of a common Vincentian Theologate in Africa goes back 25 years to when the Vincentian provincial superiors who formed COVIAM (Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar), mostly Europeans, gathered for their first continental meet-

ing. They discussed the challenge of formation for the growing number of Vincentian missionary candidates. Years later, various levels of local formation, such as, postulancy, internal seminary, and philosophy were in place. The provincial superiors, however, also needed advanced theological and Vincentian formation.

In 2015, COVIAM members committed formators and resources to train men at St. Vincent de Paul Theologate of the Province of Nigeria, located at Enugu. Today the COVIAM Common Theologate serves: Nigeria, Cameroon, Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozam-

bique, Rwanda, and Burundi. Thirty-nine seminarians were enrolled in 2018. This VSO project also addressed the need for a large and reliable bus for the Theologate. With the help of the VSO and our donors, the Province of Nigeria purchased a new 30 passenger Toyota Coaster Bus. The seminarians now have reliable transportation to classes and activities at Bigard Memorial Seminary, Vincentian ordinations, community events and Sunday ministry. The project allows a visionary formation program to deliver excellent formation with modern efficiency.



30 passenger Toyota Coaster Bus for COVIAM Theologate

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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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