

MADAGASCAR REGION - A REPORT (AFRAM ASSEMBLY IN TOGO Feb 2010)

INTRODUCTION

It is a great joy for me to be present here and brief you about Madagascar Region. Last year, we celebrated 20 years of our presence in Madagascar (1989-2009). We had a modest celebration – a thanksgiving mass at the grotto of Our Lady of Rosary in Vohilava (this is our first mission post). The first 4 pioneers were the four Indonesian confreres but slowly many other confreres volunteered to this region. No doubt, some left but the number was always steady. One of the greatest achievements during these 20 years is the first SVD Malagasy priest Fr. Albert Louis Mamonijisoa, svd. He is appointed to Papua New Guinea province

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION:

PRESENT SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY AND OF OUR REGION:

Madagascar is a beautiful country in the Indian Ocean- famous for its fauna and flora. At present, the political and economic situation is going from bad to worse. Almost one year passed, we do not know who the real President of the country is. The country is in political chaos. As a result, the economic situation suffers a lot- many are jobless, increase in theft & looting of shops, corruption etc; There were many international, continental and national negotiations took place but no good result. In short, the political situation is unstable.

Concerning Madagascar region, a lot of development both spiritual and material has been taken place up to now. In the beginning, we were rather slow in our mission work- learning the language, adapting to the local customs and mentality. We have two districts SVD in our region: the north district and the south district. In every mission post we built primary schools, multipurpose halls and many big and small chapels.

2. CONFRERES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES:

At present, the number of confreres is 26 (24 priests and two brothers).

- Parish Activities----- 11 confreres (42%)
- Administration ----- 03 confreres (11.5%)
- Formation Programme----02 confreres (7.6%)
- Special Apostolate----- 02 confreres (7.6%) one is in charge of Catechetical and Biblical centre and the other is in charge of Bible Apostolate and University Apostolate.
- Language studies ----- 02 confreres in Malagasy course
02 confreres in Togo for French course
- One confrere is involved in the Charismatic Movement and he is heavily booked for the retreats.

The confreres are enthusiastic about their apostolate although they encounter some difficulties in the exercise of their duties, such as health problem, transportation (bad roads) etc.

The poverty of the people is another social concern for us. There are certain mentalities and fadys (taboos) in the diocese Mananjary which are against the Christian morals and teaching, so, it is difficult for us to accept them for example, if a woman gives birth to the twin, the parents have either to kill them or to give for adoption. These types of customs and mentalities are in way block for both spiritual and material progress.

2. SELF-RELIANCE PROGRAMME:

We are aware of this programme, therefore in every Assembly we discuss about this issue. Last Assembly, we took some concrete steps as follows:

2.1 Lovasoa:

This is our Agricultural Farm of 12 hectares of land. After many years of investment, it is now yielding fruits like vanilla, pepper, coffee and vegetables and fruits .It brings some income to our region.

2.2 Antsirabe: We have also purchased 2 hectares of land in the high plateau. This land is suitable for cultivating rice, potatoes and other vegetables.

2.3 Economic Commission: A financial commission has been established to meet the financial needs of the Region. The members of the commission have finalised a programme to get some income for the region such as buying and selling cloves, vanilla, pepper etc.

3. FOLLOW UP OF THE BROTHER ASSEMBLY:

We were fortunate because one of our confreres Fr Sebastian Quadros participated in the Assemble so he shared with us the major events and outcome of the Assembly especially the recommendations. We are in favour of celebrating June 12 as SVD Brother Vocation promotion Day. We have stimulated our brothers to take active visible part in the liturgical celebration once the time come.

4. YEAR OF THE PRIEST: We welcomed the Year of the Priest with lots of joy, hope and enthusiasm. We reflected over the valuable virtues of St. Jean Marie Vianney- the Curé d'Ars. We thank the Lord for the gift of priesthood and we also acknowledge our unfaithfulness to the Lord.

At the diocesan level, we had a recollection for all the priests of the diocese. At the Regional level, we organised two sessions- one session for the junior confreres and another for the senior most confreres. The Mission Secretary organised these sessions. They were fruitful and useful to the confreres. To close the Year of the Priest, the Bishop of Mananjary diocese, is going to construct an Adoration Chapel at the Cathedral as a mark of the Year of the Priest.

5. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE: In the future we think of shifting the regional house to the Capital- Antananarivo because of communication facilities, easy access to the airport and also it is convenient for the both districts- the district of North and the district of South.

In our Regional Assembly, one of the points discussed elaborately was the four characteristic dimensions of our society. In the future, we want to develop and work more these characteristic dimensions of our society especially in our parishes and communities level.

It is our desire to collaborate in AFRAM activities and programmes especially in Formation programme.

6. CONCLUSION: Though we experience ups and downs in our region, we could confidently say our region is alive and dynamic. We have made efforts to proclaim the Word of God through four characteristic dimensions of our society and we look forward to celebrating the 25 years in the near future. May the Holy Spirit guide and show us the light at the times of darkness and the Our Lady of Rosary, our patroness of the Region, may protect us and give us the courage to continue the mission of her Son in Madagascar which is also our mission.