

# *Viator Web no. 57*

*April 2013*

## **Pastoral Visit to Burkina Faso**

From February 25 through March 11, the General Council made its first pastoral visit, which was a wonderful experience of solidarity with the Burkina Community and which proved to be very profitable both for the General Councilors and for the confreres who were visited.

Upon our arrival, the foundation council gave us a work of art: an oil painting of Saint Viator catechizing under a baobab tree. That work of art was a wonderful reflection of the young Church of Burkina Faso and of its close relationship with the Viatorian charism.

Thank you, to all the Viatorians of Burkina Faso, for your very warm welcome!

### **The Burkina Faso Foundation in Brief**

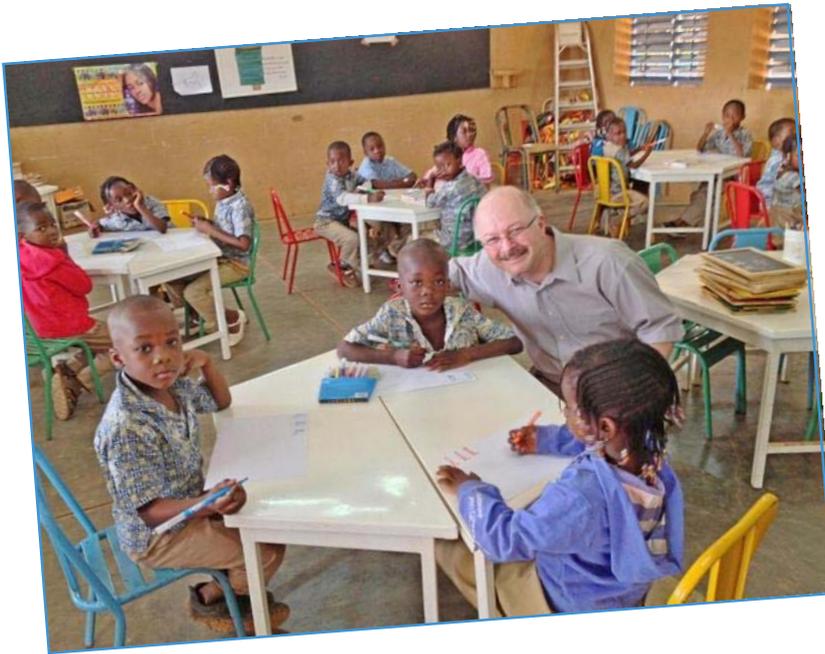
- Founded in 1999 by the Canadian Province.
- Today's 20 religious include 4 from Canada, 1 from Haiti, 1 from Nigeria, and 20 from Burkina Faso
- Burkina Faso is situated northeast of the Ivory Coast and south of Mali.
- With the Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso constitutes the CCVAO [the Viatorian Coordinating Council for West Africa], an international organization of solidarity between the foundation and the vice-delegation.
- 6 priests, 14 brothers, 6 pre-associates, 3 novices, 4 postulants.

## *A Word from the Superior General*

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It was some fourteen years ago. Center 7400 [Saint Lawrence Boulevard] in Montréal was in a festive mood, awaiting an event that, while not unique in the life of the Canadian Province, was made memorable by its context. Five missionaries were leaving to establish a new foundation in Burkina Faso. The simple celebration was marked with this advice: *Go forth with the best of yourselves and the grace of God will meet you at your destination!*

February 25, 2013. The flight that took us to Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, was long enough to permit me to review the entire founding history: choosing the place, inviting



Primary school at the “Groupe Scolaire Saint-Viateur”

each of the five founders, sending them forth on their mission, establishing a partnership with the Province of France (at that time) with a view to facilitating mutual assistance between the two African foundations, and living the great day of departure in October, 1999. I had rarely seen a province so emotional and so moved by what a spirit of confidence can bring into existence.

Two short months later, I was on my way to Burkina Faso to accompany the confreres in the conclusion of their discernment

process as they would choose their first apostolic work, which turned out to be a school already in existence, which became ours thanks to the providential support of the Archbishop of Ouagadougou. Thus came into existence the Saint Viator School Group.

It is true that I had returned to Burkina Faso several times as required by my pastoral tasks in the Canadian Province, but I must confess that emotion flooded into my heart when our plane landed at the airport. Shortly after my election at last summer’s General Chapter, Jocelyn Dubeau, the superior, delicately reminded me of my close bonds with the Burkina Faso Foundation and asked that my first visit, as Superior General, take place in “the land of upright people.” As circumstances would have it, plans had to be changed and we found ourselves in this charming and friendly red-soiled country. Yes, I did say “we,” because all the General Council members were there.

One of our very first decisions was, insofar as possible, to make our visits together. Why? Because it is the role, not only of the Superior General, but of the entire General Council, to live experiences that make it possible to become familiar with the lived realities of our national communities and to express our solidarity with them. In that respect, the

encouragement of our Burkina Faso confreres to continue doing so was very definite. We are convinced that such visits will enable us to more adequately carry out the mission that we have received. Getting to know others and becoming known by others guarantee the dialogue that is the very basis of what our part in community life ought to produce.

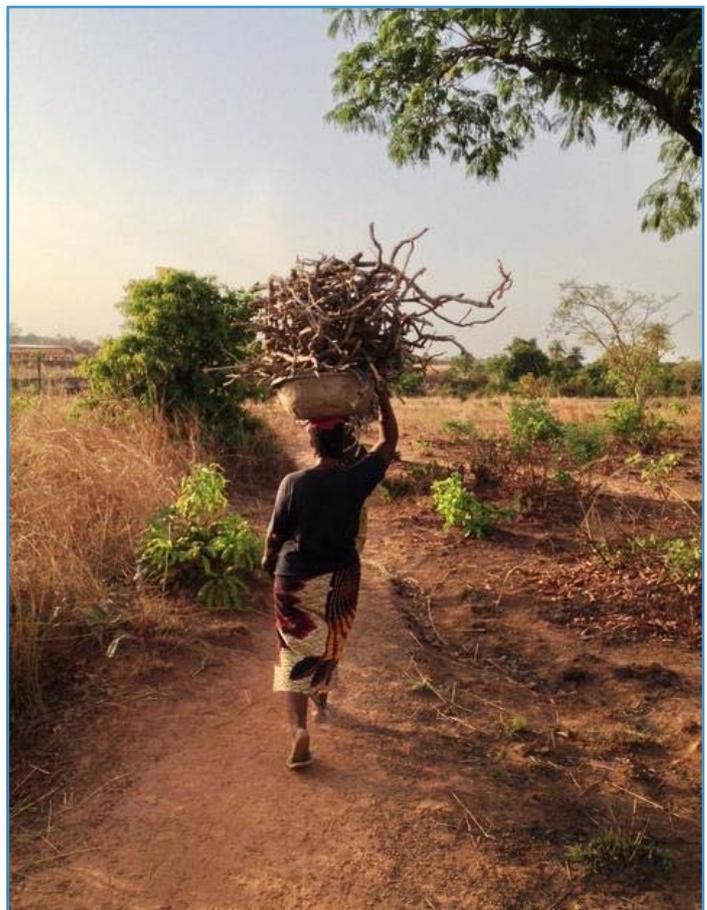
Three local communities, three apostolic works, an initial formation center, a novitiate, miles and miles to be traveled, but one and the same passion that animates each and every one. What are thirteen years in the life of a community? They are few and they are many! They are few, because the spirit of the time of foundation must still leave its imprint on decisions that are made and on the availability of each person, assuring the solidity of what henceforth will be established upon solid foundations. Hope, self-denial, and a constant search for the will of God must prevail both at the moment of asking as well as repeating a *Fiat voluntas tua* that bears witness to a community's most precious possession: a sense of the common good.

The challenges are certainly great and, for some time to come, we must believe in the miracle that is produced by deep faith in order to continue with the harmonious development of the Burkina Faso Foundation. Our pastoral letter, which is available on the General Direction's Webpage, mentions several of those challenges. But one belief has filled our hearts since our return to Rome: that foundation is facing a beautiful future. That conclusion comes forth from the meetings that we had with each local community, from our conversations with those who are responsible for our apostolic works and their collaborators, and from the honest and open dialogues that characterized our two times of discussion with the council of the foundation. The future is reflected in the flame that brightens the faces of those who told us, in all simplicity, about what they are living. It can also be seen in those beliefs that, as fertile terrain, provide roots for long-term actions carried out by those who believe that the future is not first of all the fruit of our efforts, but a gift from God.

In brief, those two weeks of visits were a time of discovery for many, a renewed solidarity for me, and, for all of us, an opportunity to take great pride in knowing that the names of Saint Viator and Louis Querbes are recognized in Burkina Faso. Those names reflect a mission enlivened by our Viatorian charism.

“The land of upright people” knows how to maintain the traces of the people who have walked there. The hearts of visitors are filled with the warmth of extended hands that remains even after departing from the country. That is why in that part of Africa, by way of saying “goodbye,” people give you only half of the road in order to be assured of seeing you again!

Our most sincere gratitude!



## ***Father André Simon Crozier talks about the local communities***

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Even though Father Alain Ambeault, as Provincial Superior, had already visited them in the first years of the foundation, our encounters with the three current local communities were for us, as General Council members, an entirely new and magnificent experience. And that should re-assure those who were surprised by such a “major movement.”

In a country experiencing extremely high temperatures, we discovered the three places where Viatorians live and work: Ouagadougou, Boassa, and Banfora. Over the past several years, the *Balafon Newsletter* has familiarized us with the names of certain persons and places. But there is nothing like placing one’s feet on the red earth of those sub-Saharan



**G. C. with the direction team of our Banfor school**

countries to share in the life of the people.

The advantage of spending a certain amount of time with Viatorians saved us from any remarks about a visit that was too short. Life as lived on a daily basis, while our hosts are fully active, is just as important to see as are the special events that are arranged for visitors from Rome.

In fact, the foundation council had planned a series of interesting encounters, not only with each local com-

munity, but also with the different formation teams: in the high school, the grade school, the parish, and the novitiate. We even met with a group of six pre-Associates. Our free time was used profitably to review our impressions of our different meetings and to summarize the elements necessary for an evaluation.

Our quarters in the residence near the Saint Viator School Group, in the Dassagho neighborhood of Ouagadougou, brought us into close contact with the Louis Querbes Community, where the local superior is Brother Denis Kima, the assistant superior is Brother Hermann Bamouni, and the local treasurer is Brother Victor Zongo. Father Céraphin Ouédraogo is the president of the School, with Brother Hermann serving as the principal and Brother Marius Sanou as the chaplain. On Sunday, March 10, Brother Marius received the ministries of lector and acolyte in the presence of a number of high school students.

In Ouagadougou, two confreres are full-time students: Denis Kima and Désiré Legma. Five others are studying in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) or Canada. Nor should we forget Father Gervais

Dumont, who serves as assistant of the foundation council, accompanies the brothers who are in formation, and maintains the archives. He remains profoundly delighted with the two years that he has lived in the Boassa hermitage. In the house, he appears as the permanent wisdom figure that every group needs.

We very much appreciated sharing in the prayer life of the community, albeit in a rather tiny chapel. A good number of parishioners, faithful to the Office of Lauds and to the Eucharist, celebrate with us in the relatively fresher early-morning temperatures. In return, the Viatorians are honored to participate in parish celebrations on Sundays. It is encouraging to note the active presence of lay people and other men and women religious at the important events of our communities.

Saint Viator Novitiate in Boassa is about one hour away. We spent one day there in the company of the five persons who form a motivated community: Julien Rainville, the novice master; Mathieu Bard, the *socius*; and Michel, Hermann, and François, the three novices. We shared on many different levels. First of all, with the community; then, with the formation personnel; finally, with the novices themselves. The Eucharist and the meal were festive and within a framework of “enlarged horizons.” Sisters and lay people take advantage of certain classes given either by the novice master or by other guest speakers. It was with regret that we had to leave this place of study, reflection, and prayer.



The novicate, Boassa

The next day, we would have to travel many miles to return to Banfora. The Louis Querbes School Group and Saint Viator Parish are currently lodged in temporary quarters as they await the construction of the church in

another location. Father Jean-Marc Provost, the pastor, is assisted by Father Macaire Sandouidi and by two other Sunday associates. We were very impressed at the Mass on Sunday, March 3, when we saw the fervent participation of everyone in attendance, from the oldest to the youngest, especially the choir members and the “Samuels” serving at the altar.

The Banfora community is composed of six religious and of four young postulants (Irénée, Ghislain, Fulbert, and Donatien). The local superior is Father Macaire; the assistant superior is Brother Gabriel Ouédraogo; the treasurer is Brother Valmont Parent. Brother Jocelyn Dubeau, superior of the foundation, is the president of the Louis Querbes School Group; Brother Gabriel is the principal; Brother Kingsley Ogudo is responsible for the Professional Formation Center. All of them collaborate with an experienced team of teachers who are open to the different religions to which the students belong, be they “traditional,” Muslim, or Christian.

In “the land of upright people,” the warmth of the climate could not overpower the warmth of the welcome that we received everywhere!

## *Impressions of Brother Carlos Ernesto Flórez*

### *The Dream of Father Querbes has also been realized in Burkina Faso*

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In the Gospel, we see very well how Jesus, passing through the midst of ordinary people, calls them: "Come and follow me!" Those whom he invites become his disciples. The initiative comes from Him, from the Master, and thus the call is an exceptional gift from God.



Council with the 4 postulants

When we speak of vocation programs, we are recognizing, first of all, the close relationship between the meaning of God's call and the spiritual life. Added to those are formation on all the levels of religious life, vocational stability, the responsibility with which a person today accepts to respond to God's call, the reality that exists in the relationship with culture, and the fact of knowing that the Catholic religion is very young in this country. All of this involves a process that, for the Viatorians of Burkina Faso, is scarcely thirteen years old.

And still, after thirteen years, it is necessary to discover the best methodology for inviting young Africans into religious life and specifically into the Congregation of the Clerics of Saint Viator within the deep meaning of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Doing so in an environment where an increase in vocations requires clarity and serious discernment brings about some very complex challenges.

The attention paid to the young people who attend our schools in Ouagadougou and in Banfora is genuinely a sign of God's presence among those with whom the Viatorians exercise their apostolic mission.

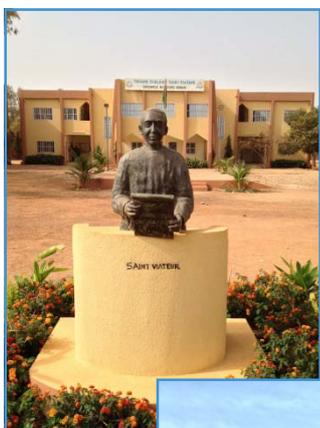
Additionally, the witness of the lives of the founders and of the first Burkina Faso Viatorians has also helped other university students to accept God's call. The experience of the Gospel made real in the Viatorians of Burkina Faso touches, in one way or another, the hearts and souls of young people, who are thirsting to discover the deep sense of their vocational search.

Our Burkina Faso community, while still very young, is faced with a multitude of dreams and challenges. The young Viatorians of the Burkina Faso Foundation are hoping for a future where the desire of Father Querbes will flourish in vocations and in holiness; a future that will be rich in vocations and in apostolic works; a future that will assure the permanence of the Clerics of Saint Viator on a continent in need of evangelization possibilities that are solid, accessible, and available to those who require them.



Br. Marius Sanou, Fr. André Crozier et Br. Jocelyn Dubeau

## Point de vue du frère Luis Álvarez Torres Le Burkina Faso vu sous un angle économique



Burkina Faso is a medium-sized country, covering some 116,000 square miles, situated for the most part south of Mali. Its topography is rather flat, with several rare elevations of a maximum of 2,500 feet. Its climate is marked by two seasons: the rainy season (about four months) and the dry season (up to eight months). Temperatures are very hot, at times rising to more than 104 degrees Fahrenheit. And those are the temperatures that we experienced during our recent visit..



GSSV de Ouagadougou

ELOQ de Banfora

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an average *per capita* gross income of about \$1,200 a year. The population of the country is 17,000,000. A high birth rate and arid climatic conditions are factors that accentuate the poverty levels. Agriculture represents 32% of the gross national product and offers employment to 92% of all workers. That factor explains in large part why people from Burkina Faso emigrate in great numbers, including some 300,00 who have gone to the Ivory Coast.

It is within that socio-geographical environment that we must situate our Burkina Faso Foundation and make a summary analysis of its economic capacities and of its response to the desire, reiterated at the last General Chapter, of attaining financial autonomy for our foundations. But before commenting on several concrete aspects, we must refer to certain data: the foundation has been in existence for thirteen years and, at present, fifteen religious live in the country in three communities. Several religious work in two schools and one parish, while the majority are students. All buildings are the property of the Congregation.

Those who administer the material goods of our institutions (whether they be non-profit businesses or organizations) know that their economic outcomes depend directly on decisions that were made earlier. A school founded in the heart of a population without significant economic resources cannot finance outside strictly through tuition



Part of the retablo of Ouagadougou's chapel

paid by students. But since the school must fulfill its mission (that is the reason why it was founded), it must demonstrate sufficient creativity to obtain alternate and stable financial

means that will make it possible, on a continuing basis, to have the support of the supplementary revenues necessary for the functioning of the school.

With respect to the data already presented, it is obvious that the choice of Burkina Faso (which choice we must applaud, since it is our way of participating in the evangelization of that country) implies that the initiatives and the creativity of the Viatorians must be numerous and multi-faceted in order to maintain the foundation and its pastoral undertakings. We can, nonetheless, count on the youthfulness and the hopes of the Burkina Faso Viatorians, who doubtlessly constitute the greatest and the best capital that the foundation has at its disposition. When the faculty of a school is constituted in large part of Viatorians, the history and the experience of our different provinces confirm that the future is assured for many decades, both as a center of formation and of culture as well as on the level of economic security.

It is very obvious that money is not the most important element in the plans of persons and of institutions, but there is no doubt that money is necessary in order for them to attain their goals. It is fitting to hope that the Viatorians of the Burkina Faso Foundation will establish necessary objective, according to a realistic timetable, so that such financial autonomy will become, not an end in itself, but a means for arriving at sufficient institutional autonomy. Such autonomy will continue bringing to the Congregation the African version of our Viatorian charism, based upon which we preach Jesus Christ and his Gospel and raise up communities, in the African culture, where faith is lived, deepened, and celebrated.

*Impressions of  
Father Harry Célestin  
Formation in  
Burkina Faso*



Father General Vicar

The Burkina Faso Foundation is part of those budding jewels of the greater Viatorian family upon whom the future rests. We were very happy to meet with all those Viatorians who devote themselves to helping Father Querbes' charism to bloom, particularly in the different formation stages of the Viatorian Community. All the formation teams are filled with a desire to transmit, to present-day Viatorians and to future religious and associates, whatever is necessary to follow in the footsteps of Christ. They reap the fruits of that journey. It is with brilliance that certain rather remarkable figures assume their responsibilities and bring honor to all the Viatorians in "the land of upright people." Members of formation teams readily admit that challenges are not lacking.

This year, in the postulancy program, there are young men who are also concluding their course of classical studies. At the end of the year they will take time to evaluate that experience. Among the first young Viatorians, certain ones attest to the benefits and the

importance of a relatively long time spent in this stage of formation in order to become more familiar with the community and also to attain greater human and Christian maturity. The young professed religious are either studying or working. At times it becomes difficult to find a balance so as to live what they are as religious. They want to move forward in order



With the Archbishop of Ouagadougou

to implant our charism in their milieu. They also manifest a great need to review their convictions and to return to their first motivations in order to re-focus themselves on the essential: Jesus Christ. That will certainly have a positive effect upon community life and spiritual life. Certain persons spoke up and insisted upon the importance of spiritual accompaniment and also of an evaluation at the end of each year in order to promote greater maturity. The religious dimension presupposes a solid and clear base for everyone. Emphasis was also placed on an appropriate formation being provided for all our

confreres, with such formation taking our charism into account. Studies in liturgy and/or catechetics would be an important addition for the Viatorian Community.

The formation of future associates also proves to be of great importance within the foundation. There still remains much to be done so that all the local communities are aware of, and open to, that very meaningful reality in our community. Our charism indicates a spiritual itinerary that is recognized by the Church and that our Institute has the duty of transmitting and sharing. That charism is called upon to be lived out in many existential situations. The way in which lay people live out the charism will become a teaching moment and an evangelization experience for us. Our charism maintains its vivaciousness and we can appreciate its beauty only when we decide, not to keep it for ourselves, but to give it to “the Church, the People of God.”

It is true that there is a formation program in the archives, but the Burkina Faso confreres want to experiment with another program that would take into account the reality of the



Archbishop Philippe Ouedraogo and Br. Jocelyn Dubeau



Mass at St. Viator's Parish in Banfora

Foundation and that would reflect that which is specific to the Viatorians. In that respect, they are ready to pay special attention to the *Ratio Formationis* and to make it better known. That is a document that traces out the formation itinerary of our charism and defines the major aspects of the different stages of formation for the entire Viatorian Community.

## *News Briefs*

### Congratulations:

- ~ to Brother Juan Carlos Ubaque, who pronounced his first vows in Bogotá (Colombia) on January 19, 2013;
- ~ to Brother Marius Sanou, who received the ministries of lector and acolyte in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) on March 10, 2013;
- ~ to Brother Norbert Zongo, of the Burkina Faso Foundation, who was ordained a deacon in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) on March 23, 2013.

### In Our Prayers:

- ~ Brother Robert Bérubé (Ca) died on February 15, 2013, at the age of 88, in the 70<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession;
- ~ Father Jules Chartrand (Ca) died on February 19, 2013, at the age of 93, in the 72<sup>nd</sup> year of his religious profession and the 68<sup>th</sup> year of his priesthood;
- ~ Brother René Gaudet (Ca) died on February 20, 2013, at the age of 82, in the 64<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession;
- ~ Father Feliciano Nebreda (Ch) died on March 2, 2013, at the age of 87, in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession and the 52<sup>nd</sup> year of his priesthood;
- ~ Father Robert MASSÉ (Ca) died on April 7, 2013, at the age of 71, in the 49<sup>th</sup> year of his religious profession and the 45<sup>th</sup> of his priesthood;
- ~ Father Émile LAVIGNE (Ca) died on April 12, 2013, at the age of 95, in the 73<sup>rd</sup> year of this religious profession and the 69<sup>th</sup> year of his priesthood.

## *E-mail Addresses*

Please note that the General Council members have new e-mail addresses.

<b>Name</b>	<b>General Direction e-mail addresses</b>	<b>Personal e-mail addresses</b>
Alain Ambeault	supgen@querbes.org	aambeault@hotmail.com
Harry Célestin	vicgen@querbes.org	yrrahc5@yahoo.fr
Luis Álvarez	ecogen@querbes.org	lalto@csviator.es
André Simon Crozier	secgen@querbes.org	secgenviator@gmail.com
Carlos Ernesto Flórez	congen@querbes.org	cflorez@viatorians.com

The pastoral letter sent to the Foundation of Burkina Faso is available at this address of the General Direction Web site:

<http://csviator.info/generaldirection/fr/news>



*Francis,*

*Bishop of Rome*

*"Pray for me"*

We live in a world of instant communications. Whether we like it or not, life will henceforth be that way. On the evening of the election of new Pope Francis, Saint Peter's Square was filled with people using their Smart Phones to send text messages and transmit pictures as they communicated their impressions "live and direct." What a contrast that was with the chimney sending forth its white smoke and all the mystery surrounding the election of the Roman Pontiff. Two different communication worlds met on that occasion.

We live in a world where words and images have become instantaneous. Ever since the words "habemus papam" were proclaimed, every action and every statement of the new Pontiff has been scrutinized and transmitted. What kind of image does he project? He is already being compared to John Paul I, who was nicknamed "the smiling Pope." He even dares to joke with journalists. Does that make any difference? Yes, in the sense that it is the calling card of a man who knows his people, who for many years walked along with them, preferring public transportation to limousines and the side streets of poor neighborhoods to anonymous major thoroughfares. Yes, Francis comes to us with the simplicity, the humility, and the special smile that characterize the faith of Latinos. It is said that the faith of the common people, which is a simple and natural expression having its own value, was restored when the Latin American Bishops met in Aparecida. Underestimating that faith would mean failing to recognize the enviable ability that, among others, Latinos have to know how to pray with their sentiments. A smiling Pope has much to teach our world about loving spontaneously and simply and about listening to a Word of Life that comes to us through our heart.



He chose “Francis” as his name. It is said that the name “Francis” came to him during the Conclave when it seemed that he was going to be elected. Cardinal Hummes, the archbishop emeritus of São Paulo, a friend of the new Pope, embraced him and said to him: *“Do not forget the poor!”* *“It was then, all of a sudden,”* said Cardinal Bergoglio, *“that I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought about wars and, once again, of Francis, the man of peace.”* Saint Francis is the man who gives us that spirit of peace, the man of the poor. *“Ah, how I would want a Church that is poor and that is for the poor.”*

Who was going to be elected? That is the question that permeated the entire religious world after the resignation of Benedict XVI. Here is the delicious commentary of a friend of mine: *Before the Conclave, people were saying: ‘we need an administrator, we need a communicator, we need a reformer.’ But the Cardinals chose a saint for us! That should do the job.* Enriched by his pastoral experience in Argentina and moved by the missionary spirit of Aparecida, which recalled, with truth, that evangelization can only take place person to person, with one person evangelizing and with another person being evangelized, the new Pope Francis urges us to go forth and to encounter our brothers and sisters. What a gift we have been given in this Year of Faith in this Gospel resurgence that gives new life to the Church!

Our new supreme pastor is convinced that the little ones and the poor, those who were especially preferred by Jesus, are not people to be saved, but people who must be helped so that their voices will be heard and so that they can discover the way to their liberation. Since it puts us into contact with the little ones whom Jesus preferred, poverty is a theological place. It is such because it frees up a prophetic cry for justice and helps people see that hope is already at work. All of that is what our new Pope is already doing, with the pastorate that he is undertaking bearing the imprint of what he courageously accomplished in Buenos Aires. His election has just offered us some wonderful paths of conversion as we continue celebrating the Paschal Mystery.



From the balcony of Saint Peter’s Basilica, Pope Francis asked the crowd for a favor: *“Before giving you my blessing, I ask you for your prayers, the blessing of the people for their bishop. And now, bishop and people, let us go forth together!”* God is very much alive and his Word is active, changing the world and the Church. A smiling Pope can affirm that in such a way as to assure the attentiveness necessary for what he will announce afterwards. He is indeed the Bishop of Rome who presides in charity over all the Churches.

Alain Ambeault, c.s.v.