

From October 14-16, 2016, the Assumptionist family celebrated their tenth anniversary of their arrival in Togo. The celebration was highlighted by the diaconal ordination of the first two Assumptionists from this region. There was also a large number of visitors from Burkina Faso who attended the celebrations. There were five important moments during these three days of celebration…

The evening of October 13, during Vespers, in the presence of the superior general, Fr. Benoît Grière, and his vicar, Fr. Emmanuel Kahindo, six young men were received into the candidacy program: Casimir, Expedit, Jean-Olivier, Maurice, Billy and Romaric. This event captured the ongoing hope present in this new foundation.

On Friday evening, some 250 people gathered at our parish, Our Lady of the Assumption, to commemorate the ten years of our presence in Sokode (Togo). We had asked a handful of witnesses to say a word at this occasion: Fr. Benoit Griere, Superior general (provincial of France at the time), one of the principal players in the foundation in 2006 together with the provincials of Africa and Madagascar; Most Rev. Ambroise Djoliba (in video format), bishop emeritus of Sokode, who welcomed us into his diocese; Most Rev Celestin-Marie Gaoua, the current bishop and the pastor of the mother church when we arrived; Rev. Alfred

Pignan, episcopal vicar; Fr. Vincent Kambere, A.A., currently local superior and provincial of Africa at the time of the foundation; and Mr. Louis Doloma, one of our parishioners. I was the facilitator of this informative round-table presentation. There was also a beautiful testimony given by a Presbyterian pastor who underlined the fellowship he had experienced with the Assumptionists, a fellowship that he had never thought possible with his ‘separated brethren,’ and insisted on maintaining this relationship. He received the assurance of all present and first and foremost from Bishop Gaoua, recently appointed the head of ecumenical affairs for the bishops’ conference of Togo!

On Saturday morning, in the presence of members of the Assumption Family, we revisited the history of the Assumptionists in West Africa. As one of the last religious to serve in Ivory Coast, I spoke of our 33 years of presence there. There were 23 Assumptionists who served in this country over the years, present in the high school we founded in Abidjan, Notre-Dame d'Afrique, and in five different parishes. Then Fr. Jean-Paul Sagadou, the first Assumptionist to enter the foundation in Togo, reflected on his experience. He was followed by the sisters of our Assumption Family: the Religious Sisters of the Assumption, the Orants of the Assumption, the Oblates of the Assumption, and the Little Sisters of the Assumption. During the second half of the morning, one of our young brothers, Martin Adandogou, Fr. General, and a lay friend from Ouagadougou, Robert Ouedraogo, shared their dreams for the future.

Saturday evening was set aside for another kind of celebration --- a festive meal and an evening of entertainment: local dance and humor, which took place at the St. Augustine Cultural Center, and provided by some young friends of the Assumption.



The last, but by far not the least important, event took place at Mass on Sunday morning, presided by the Bishop Gaoua. We had foreseen such a large crowd that a tent was rented to accommodate the thousand people who attended. During this Mass Bishop Gaoua ordained his first two deacons, the first two Assumptionists ordained to the diaconate in West Africa, Brothers Lucas Sezouhlon and Georges Houssou.

By the end of our three days of celebration, we were all ready to move on to the next ten years of our presence here!

Rev. Benoît Bigard, A.A.
Regional superior of West Africa