

In 1983 at the age of 61, Fr. Morand Kleiber, a former provincial and teacher, was asked to pack up his bags and undertake a new mission, professor of philosophy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the Assumptionists were experiencing an influx of vocations thanks to the openness of the second bishop of the diocese of Beni-Butembo, Most Rev. Emmanuel Kataliko. Bishop Kataliko, trained by the Assumptionists, who had from the beginning of their efforts in the diocese chosen to orient all vocations to the diocesan clergy, came to the conclusion that it was time to encourage the presence of male religious life in his diocese and where better to start than with the Assumptionists themselves? Thus it was that the first young Congolese entered the Assumptionist formation program in 1979. By the time Fr. Morand came in 1983 there was already a sufficient number of young religious that a house of philosophy was opened.

Fr. Morand would stay for 22 years and, once he had to return to France, left his heart behind in many ways. He decided that this people that he had served and come to love were in desperate need of financial assistance. Therefore, he organized a network of friends and relatives as benefactors and over the years the network grew as did the projects they supported. At the beginning of February Fr. Morand sent out one of his regular newsletters keeping his "friends" abreast of what is going on. You will find excerpts of his comments below.

As this new year begins, we look ahead with all of our own concerns: political, financial, familial. So, too, do our African friends but they are plunged into an indescribable poverty and unrelenting violence, the consequences of wars, given the name "liberation", from 1996-2003, but which have, in fact, never ended. The tragedy is exacerbated all the more by the fact that by all accounts this country, five times the size of France, is one of the richest in the world in terms of raw materials. How is it that the population remains one of the poorest in the world? Exploitation by multi-national companies and rampant government corruption.

The Assumptionists who work there see these realities but they also see something else. In sub-Saharan Africa over the past 100 years (1911-2011) the number of Christians has grown from 9 million to 516 million. In the diocese which we evangelized, Beni-Butembo, beginning in 1929, 75% of the population of 1.8 million is Catholic. To me this growth is all the more stunning because here in France all I see is a Church in decline. But the Church universal is not limited to my little corner of the world. Elsewhere, such in the Congo, the reality is much different.









Currently the network of benefactors which was begun some years ago continues to support two major groups: orphans and diabetics. We provide scholarship money so that orphans may attend school; otherwise they run the risk of becoming street kids or worse yet delinquents or boy-soldiers. We currently help three hundred such orphans a year. In recent years we have provided a large number of them with advanced vocational training in shoe-making and repairs, painting, and barbering/hair-dressing. Today thousands of orphans are praying for you, their benefactors. What is more is that one of our "graduates" has initiated a program for orphans in agricultural formation CEFOVA (Centre de Formation et de Vulgarisation Agricole/Center for Formation in Practical, Popular Farming); here young people learn systematic ways to cultivate bananas, cassava, rice, and potatoes and to raise rabbits and chickens. The Center has also begun to travel from village to village to introduce the local populations to these advanced methods. It is one effective way to address the ever-present danger of famine.











