

By Br. Milad Yacoub, A.A.

(Br. Milad is an Egyptian Assumptionist who currently works at the Assumptionist barge community on the River Seine near Paris, a community that serves the poor, especially immigrants. Br. Milad holds a doctorate in Sociology from the University of Paris X- Nanterre granted in 2008.)

This story began about two years ago when two provincials at the time were meeting and discussing different topics, Fr. Benoît Grière of France and Fr. Vincent Kambere of Africa. It was at that moment that the possibility of my teaching a couple of courses at ISEAB arose as a form of collaboration between the two provinces. It is a grace and an opportunity for me to have the Assumption ask me to share some of the knowledge I gained before entering the Congregation. It was also a joy to be able to discover the Assumption on this vast continent that I belong to, since I am originally from Egypt. Besides, it is the dream of every Egyptian to see the source of the Nile!

Several weeks teaching

ISEAB is a wonderful initiative of the Assumptionists, in continuity with the educational institutions of our founder, Emmanuel d'Alzon. I gave three courses while I was there to students in the M.A. program: "The Sociology of Poverty," "Gender and Development," and a seminar on research methods in the social sciences. I was a bit taken aback by the intense pace of the classes (45 hours a week) and by the fact that the students had no problem following along. I was impressed with their level of academic preparedness in spite of the scarcity of resources (buildings, books, computer technology, etc.). The youth of the Congo is a veritable source of wealth and of hope for this country.



Having given courses in the department of "Development Sciences and Technics," I was particularly interested in getting to know two works in which the province of Arica is involved in view of social and economic development. Given the extraordinary potential of this country, the ADL (Association de Développement Local/Association of Local Development) and the Palmba (palm plantation of Mbau) were signs of hope that the local population might one day realize its dreams.

Getting to know our brothers and communities better

One constant quality of Assumptionist communities is without a doubt the quality of the

welcome one receives. During my whole time there (mid-May to the end of June), I was truly received as a brother and I want to thank all those I met. I am also grateful for the many celebrations that I was able to share with them like the nomination of the new provincial, Fr. Protais Kabila.

Even if the community spirit in Africa is similar to that in France, there are many things that are different. First of all, there is the number of young people in formation. The Province of Africa is in full growth mode. Assumptionist religious life is so "attractive" that the province must carefully screen those selected from a large pool of candidates. It's fairly typical to have novitiate classes of 20 each year in the Congo (this doesn't include those in English-speaking region of East Africa). Another difference is the clear emphasis on self-financing over the past few years. The entire province has made it a major priority to find local means to finance the expenses of the Province. A third and final difference that I would mention is the great missionary impetus of the province. One need only look at the Assumptionist Directory of religious to find out that nearly 40 religious form this province are stationed in other provinces of the Congregation. Besides, the province is continually receiving requests from local (and not so local) bishops to found in their dioceses.

I would encourage all my fellow Assumptionists to get to know this province better and even to visit, as I had the good fortune to do.

(for a short video on the palm plantation, go to http://vidgrids.com/red-palm-oil-soap)