

("The Congregation will set up an international volunteer program for young people and adults involving the entire Assumption Family." Thus reads the commitment of the Assumptionist general chapter in 2005, a commitment re-iterated at last year's chapter. In fact the Congregation has established two international volunteer programs, one under the supervision of the Province of France, www.volontariat-assomption.org , and one co-sponsored by the Assumptionists and the Religious of the Assumption in the United States, Associate Missionaries of the Assumption, www.assumptionvolunteers.org . In the following interview, we offer the reflections of one current French volunteer living and working with an Assumptionist community in Sokode, Togo, Jérémie Six. He is interviewed by an Assumptionist novice, Br. Rémi-Clovis)

- *Rémi-Clovis (RC):* ***Could you introduce yourself to our readers?***

- Jérémie Six JS): My name is Jérémie. I am 26 years old. was born in Lille, in the northern part of France; both of my parents are from this region. After studying mathematics for five years at the university I received my certification to teach in public schools. After two years of teaching, both formative and rewarding, I decided to change direction and give a little of myself for others, those I did not know and who were needy. That's how I came about my decision to go on mission.

- *RC:* ***What does "Assumption Volunteers'' mean?***

- JS: First of all, I think of being a volunteer. As far as "Assumption" is concerned, I hadn't heard of it before, but its program is the one to which I was finally attracted. I didn't know much about Assumption values and spirit before, but in the short time I have been exposed to them, I find that I am comfortable here with my personal faith. After living in community with Assumptionists and working side by side with them for three months, I can affirm loud and clear that I recognize myself in these values.

- RC: ***Is this your first mission or have you already had other experiences before coming to Togo?***

- JS: This is my first.

- RC: ***Speaking of experience, could you say a word to us about your educational background and your spiritual journey?***

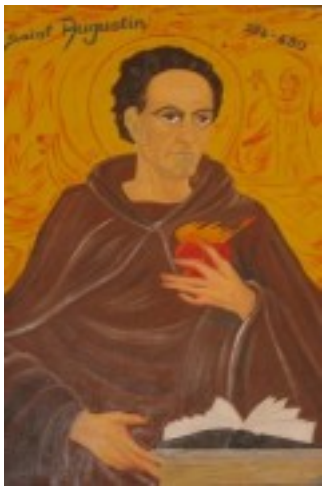
- JS: I did a science track in high school and then completed formation in teaching mathematics. As for my spiritual journey, I am a cradle Catholic. I went to catechism classes and was confirmed when I was 16. I went on a number of pilgrimages when I was young, first of all as a participant and then as a team member. I had the pleasure and the great fortune, especially, to go to Rome, to Fatima, to Lourdes, to Compostella and, to top it all off, to the Holy Land with 2,000 young people sent by the bishops of France in 2009. I've also been able to go on several spiritual retreats, whether in a group or alone.

- RC: ***Did you hear about the Assumption Volunteers through pubic or private channels?***

- JS: Through both, actually. Officially I am being sponsored by the DCC (Délégation Catholique pour la Coopération/Catholic Volunteer Network) which is an organization dependent on the bishops of France…
So, in a way, I have been sent by all the dioceses of France!!!

- RC: ***How long will you be staying and what do you hope to accomplish?***

- JS: I accepted a one-year commitment, renewable. I have one task while I am here: to help to develop the CCSA (Centre Culturel Saint Augustin/St. Augustine Cultural Center) run by the Assumptionists so that it might benefit as many of Sokode's young people as possible (cf. http://www.frerebenoit.net/2011/02/19/sortir-de-l%E2%80%99esprit-ethniciste-nationaliste-fondamentaliste
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http://www.la-croix.com/Religion/S-informer/Actualite/Un-voyage-africain-sous-le-signe-de-la-reconciliation-_NP_-2012-08-08-840463
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- *RC:* ***What are your areas of greatest interest?***

- JS: Areas of interest.....?? Let's see. First of all, my family and friends…what's happening to them, what they're up to. Next, human relationships of all sorts...meeting new people, sharing time with people who are interesting and that help me to grow. Finally, since I was a little kid, I have loved sports, physical exercise of any kind. I love swimming especially, but also soccer, mountain-biking, cross-country running, hiking, and tennis. Actually I love all sports the same!

- *RC:* ***What have been your first impressions and observations?***

- JS: There's a lot of work to be done…Africa is another world. I am not sure if it was what inspired the words of the famous song by Jean Louis Aubert, *Another World*, but that's what I thought of first when you asked the question---so different from anything in the Western world …My first impressions have been very good, indeed excellent, given the remarkable welcome I

have received from all the Togolese people and all those with whom I live and work. There has also been a sense of my inadequacy in the face of the work that needs to be accomplished to "develop this country," to help it grow. I try always to keep in mind as well that the so-called developed countries, like France, are in no position to lecture African countries or to think of themselves as somehow superior. Yes, perhaps, they have superior technology, but certainly not in human affairs. That's undeniable! So, sometimes, I wonder about how useful my presence is here as a volunteer, sent by France. I don't want to be a simple Frenchman who invests money "for the cause." Being somewhat naive, I really want to help the economic development of this country, help it to grow. But the reality of this land tells me more and more that such hopes will only happen over a long time because there is so much that needs to be done.



- RC: ***As a young Assumption volunteer, what are your expectations of and wishes for the young people of Sokode?***

- JS: As far as an Assumption volunteer, I really don't have expectations of them. My hope is that as many the young people of Sokode may discover the CCSA so that they grow, see life differently, and feel at ease, above all, in themselves, with their lives. I have no pretensions of "saving" them. From what? I have no idea. But I would like to offer them an alternative ---- something that would give them support in their difficult daily lives, to help them perhaps to get a degree

- RC: ***Any words by way of conclusion.***

- JS: Thanks for this interview. It has helped me to think about who I am, what I am doing, and what I would like to accomplish…



It's always good to take time out to look around oneself and reflect. Who knows, perhaps what I said today will be different from what I would say tomorrow…