



Br. Milad, third from the right

February 9-23, 2019 – Ouagadougou

While he was visiting the Assumptionist community in the capital city of Burkina, Br. Milad Yacoub, the provincial treasurer of the Province of Europe, gave an interview with Br. Jovic Kouepou Kouepou, who is currently finishing his philosophy studies.

Q. Could you give us a short biographical sketch of your life as an Assumptionist?

A. I first met the Assumptionist when I was living in the Assumptionist student residence in Juvisy sur-Orge, a suburb of Paris, from 2002 to 2004. Later, while I was working as a volunteer in the river barge community of *Je Sers* for the homeless and migrants on the Seine River that I

met Fr. Nicolas Tarralle. It was my decision to enter the Assumptionists matured. At this time, I continued my studies in sociology and earned a doctorate. After a long postulancy I returned to Juvisy to complete my novitiate and pronounced my first vows in 2010. Afterward, I spent four more wonderful years with the barge community all the while pursuing theology studies on-line at the University of Strasbourg. I was then transferred to our youth hostel in Paris and, in 2017, the Provincial asked me to become the provincial treasurer.

Q. What has been your first impression here in Ouagadougou and what have you discovered?

A. I have been greatly impressed from the very beginning, by the warm welcome I received at the airport by Fr. Nicolas to that I have received from all the other brothers whom I am meeting for the first time. Wherever you go at the Assumption, you feel at home and feel that you have known your Assumptionist brothers for a long time, thanks to the spirit of warmth and hospitality. That's important. I have been really touched by this community because among the young people there is a *joie de vivre* clearly present: conversations at table, prayer together, the way the brothers get along --- you can see it immediately. At the same time, everyone goes about his work seriously, whether that's studies or apostolic work. It's quite noteworthy. I'm very happy to far with my experience!

Q. Regarding the future vicariate of West Africa, what are your hopes for this new foundation?

A. The issue of the vicariate is happening at a good time since we are currently seeing the first generation of brothers completing their cycle of studies and now prepared to undertake apostolic work. We also can see that there are formators and apostles issuing from Togo, Burkina Faso, and neighboring countries. Therefore, we can foresee moving on to the next stage, i.e. a little more autonomy, the putting in place of some structures of local authority, so that this autonomy might grow even more. There has already been progress, thanks be to God! But there's still work to do. That's why we're speaking of a vicariate. Now is the time.

Q. From a financial point of view, what do you see as the needs in West Africa?

A. The challenge at the moment is to see how the brothers can contribute to the financial life of the vicariate. When one is studying, it is normal that one doesn't have work that brings in financial resources. But we can never forget that the first and greatest source of our revenue

must come from the fruit of our own labor. This should be reflected in the local community budgets and it has been possible in part by brothers who teach or work for Bayard. Then we need to look for our sources of self-financing; we have to look at everything, knowing that there is never only one answer to the question of meeting a community's budget. It is always many streams that form a river.

Q. In your opinion, what does it mean to live interculturality at the Assumption?

A. What gathers us together is the Rule of Life --- living with one mind and heart in the community. Whether we are from the same country or many countries, we seek to follow the same path. That is what must hold first place. The Lord who calls us unites us around the religious commitment that we all make together. That is why our differences become a source of enrichment and not a source of difficulty or misunderstanding. It is something we discover day in and day out. There is always a diversity of ways of doing things, but if we agree on what is essential, then we can live together in harmony. As for me, I have always seen interculturality as something positive. Of course, you have to take the time to speak and listen in order to understand one another.