

Interview with Luc Antaya, 19th & 22nd October 2012 in Kasama

It is a pleasure to meet you for the first time. Can you tell me more about you?

I was born on the 3rd September 1940. I am a Canadian of mixed origin. As a matter of fact, I am of German and Irish decent on the side of my mother and Algonquin and French on my father side. As you may know, the Algonquin are a tribe of the First Nations of Canada. Actually, my name Antaya is an Algonquin one meaning “ce coureur des bois”, in reference of the first French explorers who came in the early 17th century in the so called “Nouvelle France”. They were “running in the forest”. I identify myself primarily as an Algonquin.

I pronounced my oath on the 25th June 1964 in Eastview, Ottawa, and was ordained priest in Sorel on the 26th June 1965. I arrived in Zambia for the first time by plane at the International airport of Ndola on the 19th December 1965. Soon after, I went to Ilondola to learn Chibemba. Then, I went to Samfya, Kabunda, Nsakaluba, Lufubu which became Kazembe, Kawambwa, Kashokishi, Kasaba, Lubwe and Kasamba with Louis-Philippe “Pady” Girard and Jean-Louis Godinot till 2009. I am now appointed to Kasama up to 2014.

I got my official initiation into the White Fathers Club at the foot of the tree where Bishop Dupont put his tent in Chilubula. My master of initiation was Joseph Fayet (1886-1976), a Frenchman who spoke only his mother tongue and Chibemba. He pointed his finger and said: “Ici, Motomoto a planté sa tente”. Father Fayet came in Zambia before 1910 and knew Bishop Dupont (1851-1930).

Therefore, you have been in Zambia for the past 47 years.

This is right.

How would you describe yourself?

I dislike travelling. So, I stay where I am and never go back to where I was. I simply give 100% of myself wherever I am appointed. Today, I can say that I enjoy very much my knowledge of Chibemba. I spend a lot of time listening to people. If I could give an advice to the young generation of confreres, I would

encourage them to spend time listening to the people. Don't we have two ears and only one mouth? People appreciate it even though I do not solve their problems as such. But my experience shows me that listening brings healing.

What major challenge are you facing as Parish Priest of St. Annie's New Town?

First of all, I thought that my turn for being a PP was over. But, I have been told that St Annie's New Town is an easy, small, urban Parish. It might be true on paper but there are so many things going on that it makes me laugh a bit. As for your question, I think that the biggest challenge at the moment is the expansion of Pentecostal Churches. Quite a few of our youth are attracted by them. Some say that the Catholic Church is for old people. As I said, it is a big challenge. Some even see it as a danger.

What could explain this phenomenon?

Recently, I went to visit elderly and sick people in an impoverished area of the town. I discovered that a majority of young people are living with their grand-parents. Either their parents are dead or divorced. The generation gap is a tragedy whereby the grand-parents, coming from an old mentality, are lost or unable to cope with the changing times. Moreover, the young generation is cut off from the tradition and is facing tremendous difficulties to make a living.

As a Christian community, we are not able to find an answer to this social reality. We are losing touch with many young people. This is why I am thought-provoking my pastoral team to reflect and to do something about it. Fortunately, we have a good team for youth apostolate, including young confreres like Camille Konkobo and religious sisters. This is taken up also by the four parishes in Kasama town.

Thanks to you Luc. We wish you to remain an inspiring witness for all of us in years to come.