

PROFILE

Sébastien was born on the 19th May 1976 in Badzanga, Boloma Sector of the Chiefdom of Walendu Bindi in the Parish of Geti situated about 60 kms south of Bunia in the DR Congo. He was the sixth of eight children. He attended the primary school of Badzanga and obtained his certificate in 1989. He got his State Diploma at the Institute of Badzanga in 1997.

He attended the Pre-First phase training centre at the Foyer Ngongo in Goma from 1999 to 2000. Between 2000 and 2003, he studied Philosophy in Ruzizi. From there he went to Bobo-Dioulasso for his novitiate. After his novitiate, he was appointed to the Parish of St. Anthony of Egypt, Siyabuswa, KwaNdebele in South Africa. He was there from 2004 to 2006.

Sébastien was part of the first group of students who began their Theological studies in Kinshasa in 2006. He took his Missionary Oath on the 19th July 2009 in the Parish of St. Stephen, Kisenso, Kinshasa, and he received his Diaconate on the same day. He was ordained priest on the 21st September 2010 in his home diocese of Bunia. His first appointment was to the Parish of St. Kizito, Lebombo in South Africa. It was there that he had his fatal motorcar accident on the 5th January 2014.

His funeral took place on the 11th January 2014 in the Diocesan Centre of Maria Trost in Witbank. In his homily, Bishop Giuseppe Sandri, MCCJ of Witbank declared that he was deeply touched by this tragedy. He said, "The Epiphany is the feast of the manifestation of Jesus to all nations. He is the light that shines in the darkness of evil and death that are present in the world. This year, on the feast of the Epiphany, Fr. Sébastien as well as ourselves have entered into the shadow of death. On my journey home to Witbank, I felt that I was driving in this valley of darkness, of suffering and despair. I repeated to myself the words of the last Gospel: "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" Can we see, particularly those closest to Father Sébastien, the light of Jesus in this moment of darkness?"

Our confrere Chrispin Vungwa remarks that Sébastien will be remembered for the attention he paid to liturgy. He liked to quote Papal Encyclicals. The orphans and illegal immigrants will remember him for his help. Sébastien loved the Congo, his native country and suffered a lot because of the looting committed in his village by the rebels. Sébastien expressed his opinions openly and without fear.

Fr. Camille Konkobo knew Sébastien well during their years of study in Kinshasa. Camille remembers him as a courageous, hard working and peaceful man. He did things calmly but with shrewdness and kindness. He had a great aptitude for synthesising intelligently different ways of teaching. He knew how to set targets but was able to compromise. He did not get annoyed when his opinions were contested. In all that, he was a community man showing qualities of leadership.

Sébastien was a man of faith and liked the following passage from the first Letter of St. John (3, 2): "Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." His time has now come to see this in truth.

As the new Bishop of Witbank remarked, "we are a believing people, we know Jesus. We can share his Word and his Body and Blood. We believe in life and not in death. We believe that

the mysterious plan of God, the tragic death of Fr. Sébastien is a light filled moment for him, the members of his family, for the Church of Lebombo, for the Missionaries of Africa, for the Diocese of Witbank and for the world.

According to Jean-Marie Amalebondra, the confreres and friends who lived with Fr. Sébastien spoke of him as a dynamic, pleasant and generous man. He had solid principles and was an upright, convinced and zealous missionary. He had learn Zulu and Swathi very well which facilitated his contacts at a deep level with the lives of the parishioners. Until his tragic death, Sébastien had been the anchor for his family. The never-ending wars in the Congo have dispersed the family, which has been ravaged by the memories of the interethnic conflicts. In this family, he was the shining star and bearer of hope. It was if he was saying to members of his family that beyond our sufferings, there is joy in giving. It was the basis of his missionary enthusiasm.

Fr. Philippe Docq Delegate Superior of South Africa described the circumstances of his death in these terms: "On Sunday 5th December, early in the morning, Fr. Sébastien left the parish outstation of Kamhlushwa in order to help a friend whose car had broken down. From there he was to go to the communities for the Sunday services. However, somewhere on the road, he lost control of his car, which rolled several times off the road. The Police and ambulance arrived on the scene a short time after the accident. Fr. Sébastien was transported to the hospital in Tonga where he was pronounced dead. He is buried in the Diocesan Cemetery of Lydenburg to the west of the district of Mashishing, about 300 kms east of Pretoria. Fr. Ndrutsomi was only 37 years old."

Fr. Ndrutsomi left us with a witness of his apostolic work on the blog of the Southern Africa Province. You can look it up by following the links:

<http://mafrsaprovince.com/2013/07/29/so-called-zone-of-primary-evangelization/>

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