

The spirit of Creativity remains

By Serge St-Arneault, M.Afr from the *Petit Écho*, January 2014, No 1947.

I came to Zambia in January 2012, after spending about ten years in Malawi. In June of the same year, I took over the job of Provincial Secretary from Georges Lauzon. I have also lived for ten years in the Congo before going to Malawi but coming to the capital of Zambia has proved to be a joyful and beneficial change for me. I still think of my first missionary experience in the Congo as being my closest ever experience with people. This sort of encounter is not thinkable in an office like mine today. However, as much effort and dedication was needed in learning languages or customs and moving around visiting Christian communities in villages, I feel the same spirit of creativity at work today.

The key word is precisely: creativity.

As a matter of fact, I am happy to be in Lusaka. I also appreciate my work as Provincial Secretary. Living in the bush was something I greatly liked but it is no longer a reality. However, the spirit of creativity remains. It is expressed differently. It might sound strange for some of you, but I like writing minutes of meetings. Ways of putting words together can be compared to a piece of art, particularly as English is not my mother tongue. At times, I feel some stress because of deadlines and if other duties or unforeseen demands come along. As a result, it is impossible for me to follow a fixed daily working plan; confreres knock at the office door for assistance in getting an Employment Permit, going to hospital, bringing or welcoming them at the airport and so on. Besides, I am also the Superior of the Woodlands' community which has its own particular lifestyle. In short, my duties are numerous but I cannot complain. As much as possible, I try to find time to do some basic maintenance in the house on week-ends.

Woodlands provides accommodation and offers services to all confreres. I take advantage of being in this welcoming community to meet them, take pictures, update data for

their files and, at times, do interviews for the SAP blog. Actually, in addition to the 'Motomoto Echo' magazine, the blog has become an important tool of the Provincial Secretary to disseminate information among the four Sectors of the Province. I am happy to see that the SAP blog is rendering a crucial service by helping the SAP confreres to know one another better even though poor Internet connections are widespread.

The Southern African Province, as it stands today, was born only few years ago from the former SAP Province (Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa) and Zambia. Therefore, we are still learning how to move towards an integrated and unified Province knowing that each Sector has its own character, history and projects. Fortunately, I can witness that a lot has been achieved in terms of mutual support between Sectors. I see myself as facilitating this process.

My sabbatical year in 2000 helped me to discover creativity, this hidden part of myself. I wrote extensively, even poetry, during the sessions I followed in Rome and then in Jerusalem. But, I have also been inspired by Father Claude Boucher, Director of Kungoni Centre of Culture and Art in Mua, who has dedicated his life to studying and expressing his knowledge of local cultures through artistic works.

While in the bush, I did not see so clearly how important the ministry of service within the Society is crucial for all missionaries to fulfil their mission. Today, being in an office, I remain very close to confreres ministering in Parishes or Centres. I am discovering a new aspect of closeness which is primarily spiritual. This is probably what our "White Fathers family spirit", inherited from our predecessors, is all about.

I am grateful to the confreres who have asked me to become SAP Provincial Secretary. I only hope that my work is answering their wishes and expectations, especially those in authority. I am impressed by the way each one of us is rowing the boat of SAP to keep moving it in the right direction despite strong winds and waves. May the Lord help us all to develop our spirit of creativity for the good of our common mission! Amen!

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