

# Joy-filled Gospel Renewal Session June and July 2016

By Alex Manda, M.Afr



Greetings from Korhogo in Ivory Coast. I was in Tanzania in June and July to take part in the first session of the new program called ICOF (Inter-Congregational Ongoing Formation) initiated by four congregations; [Missionaries of Africa](#) (M.Afr), [Congregation of the Holy Spirit](#) (C.S.Sp.), [Society of African Missions](#) (SMA) and [Missionaries Sisters of Our Lady of Africa](#) (MSOLA). We were thirteen participants from six different congregations and from nine different countries.

The session took place in the [Spiritan Hotel called Stella Maris in Bagamoyo](#) situated at 75Km from Dar-es-salaam. Bagamoyo is the ground where the first missionaries landed from Zanzibar. Thus it was a nice place for renewal and reflection on our vocation.



This two-month renewal program is entitled “Joy – Filled Gospel Service.” Different modules were given aiming at a holistic formation as an individual, consecrated person and pastoral agent. It covered the four aspects of our lives; human, spiritual, pastoral and intellectual.

Openness among the participants facilitated group sharing, meditation, spiritual direction and time of integration aiming at discovery our *life-giving spirit* under the motto: ***rooted in Christ we rediscover ourselves for the joyful witness of the Gospel.***

The session helped me to remember the call of Christ in today’s situations and try to respond to the voice of the Lord joyfully. My vocation is no longer a “work” but a “service” with the Lord.

Many modules helped us to increase our awareness related to our strengths and weakness. So often, we try to avoid talking about our weaknesses. We put them in the *breath case* though they influence our everyday lives. Opening that *breath case* helps to understand its elements in order to transform them *into life-giving contents*. Weaknesses are not sins but part of us and can bring growth since “*there is a crack in everything*”. We need those cracks so as to bring light in our inner closed house. This awareness increases self-responsibilities in acquiring good and healthy relationships.

The session empowered me also as pastoral agent working in a globalised world. It empowered me with new skills in leadership and better management in pastoral counselling. The proclamation of the Gospel has to take into consideration today’s world challenges such as ecology, economy, finances, justice and peace.

The session updated me in some important current theologies and documents of the Church. It has been a very enriching experience. It has also increased my self-awareness and improved my relationship with Jesus Christ together with my brothers and sisters. This session has given me hope for a better and joyful ministry. It came to be a graceful opportunity for taking care of myself. Indeed, how can I care for others if I don’t care for myself? Adding to it, as Pope Francis says, an evangeliser has to be aware that he always needs to be evangelised and to be converted.

I felt that something has improved in my life because of this session. Whatever we do or say in our ministries, let us be Christ centred in giving joy to the world while, at the same time, witnessing the Gospel.

Thus, in our mission, let us have courage to stop a bit, making a break, leaving our great apostolates for a while so as to listen to our inner-self.

I am grateful to my province PAO for giving me that change of being among the first beneficiaries of that beautiful experience. ***Rooted, we bloom!***

