

WA Fraternity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

In this letter from Ghana, the Wa Fraternity shares its journey so far and considers the prospects for its future development.

Yesterday—Priests' Support Group

It was through his involvement in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, as Diocesan Coordinator/Chaplain and National Service Team member, that Fr Stephen Kantubog attended the 1986 Priests and Deacons Conference at the Franciscan University of Steubenville with another Ghanaian priest, Fr Appollinaris Anyomi. They were then both studying at Rome but were in the United States for the summer. At that 1986 Conference, they heard of the Fraternity of Priests and began sharing their thoughts about it and the possibility of trying it once they returned home to Ghana.

Fr Kantubog returned to Ghana in October 1986 while Fr Anyomi, after his studies, went to Ireland to experience the monastic life. When he returned home in 1989, he started the Volta Friars in his Diocese of Ho, losing touch with Fr Kantubog.

In the summer of 1990, Fr Kantubog was again at Steubenville, participating in the

Mission Month Programme. During this time he attended his first Fraternity meeting at Visitation House and, shortly after, while visiting Msgr Mike Kosak in St Thomas, Virgin Islands, he was further moved to begin the Fraternity back home.

When he returned to Ghana, Fr Kantubog called some introductory meetings and eventually the Fraternity (called then, the Priests' Support Group) began in the Wa Diocese.

The visit of Fr Eugene Bettinger to Wa gave the group an opportunity to learn more about the Fraternity. The planned visit of Fr Richard Champigny to inaugurate the Wa Fraternity failed at the last minute because of communication difficulties. When death claimed our brother, Fr Forrest Rouelle, in 1998, the planned retreat was led by Fr Kantubog on the theme: "The Holy Spirit and the Priest". At the end of the retreat, on August 11, the Feast of St Clare (virgin, religious and founder) the Wa Priests' Support Group was inaugurated at the Wanye Renewal Centre, with 15 priests signing the commitment form. Later

in the year, six more signed. Our leadership then comprised Fr Kantubog, leader; Fr C Kulah, secretary and Fr P. Dug-yi, treasurer.

Today—Fraternity of Priests

With its inauguration in 1998, the group decided to change its name to the Fraternity of Priests. Since then, the Wa Fraternity has survived with its ups and downs. In July 1999, Fr Tim Graff preached another retreat at Wanye where some signed for the first time and others recommitted themselves. One year later, Fr Sylvester Nankpi was privileged to attend the Annual Fraternity Conference at Narragansett, R.I. with another Wa priest, Fr Zachary Kokole. During the summer of 2001, Frs. Tim Graff and Paul Dugan of the U.S. and Dwight Merrick and George Lewis of Trinidad preached our retreat and shared the idea of Fraternity with priests in Navrongo/ Bolgatanga, Tamale, Wa and Koforidua. Their visit yielded much fruit.

In August 2001, Frs. Benette Tang and Kantubog were also privileged to participate in the Annual Conference in Trinidad. Together with some other Wa priests assisting in the States, they attended Fraternity meetings in Newark and Providence. During this summer, the Wa group was charged with the leadership role for Ghana and Africa and the hope was expressed that in the not-too-

...continued on page 3

Dear Friends of the Priesthood

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Newsletter material from all Fraternity members is gratefully accepted!

This year on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29), I was struck by the diversity of personalities and characters upon whom the Lord relied and chose to build his Church. Just reflecting on these two very different men is a sermon onto itself.

Peter was an uneducated fisherman (who probably smelled like fish—P.U.). He was impulsive, emotional, stubborn (what kids out our way call a “bone head!”), and he did not always think before he acted. I often wonder if the new name “Rock” didn’t mean more than what we usually think about when we hear it. Yet the Lord saw potential in Peter and he brought him where he needed him to be. St. Matthew tells us (Mt. 4.20) that Peter immediately abandoned his nets to follow Jesus.

Paul was a driven man and a zealous Pharisee. Blinded by pride and zeal he had to be knocked off his high horse to truly see God’s plan. He evangelized most of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

They were as different as night and day, yet the Lord was able to use them and mold them into dynamos of faith and evangelization. What the two men had in common was a dedication to God’s plan and a largess of heart which enabled them to follow the Lord wholeheartedly. They were used in powerful ways—we still reap the benefits of their ministry. Both of them gave their all, and even their blood in martyrdom.

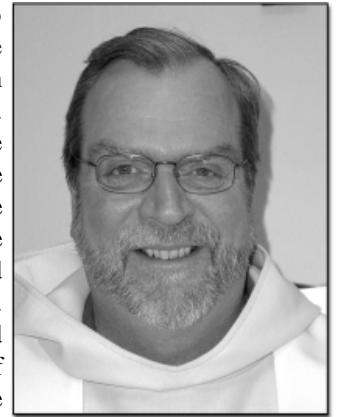
There are three points that I would like to suggest so that we can make application to our lives.

1. The change in these men of God was a gradual process; as they grew in God’s love and his Spirit, they became more and more in tune with God’s plan. Isn’t that hopeful?? God isn’t through with us yet! Our call is to be open to God’s life-changing grace and to cooperate with it.

2. Both these saints, as is obvious from the Scriptures, had to answer the question each and every disciple needs to answer: “Who do you say that I am” (Mt. 16.15)—the question Jesus asked his disciples in the feast day’s gospel reading. For any disciple in any age it is not enough to know who people say that Jesus is. What I’ve learned in religious education, or Catholic schools, or from a sermon, etc., as important as all this is, it is not enough. Each one of us has to hear the Lord personally asking us, “Who do you say that I am?”

3. All this leads to the blessed reality of conversion. One of the best ways to understand

this concept is to think of the Copernican Revolution. There was a time when people believed that the sun and the planets revolved around the earth. This a good description of how most of the world lives; we



live in a Me-centered environment, and, if we are honest, most of us struggle with this reality within ourselves daily. For all intents and purposes we are the center of our universe; our jobs, families, careers, money, worries, etc., all these things revolve around us. When Copernicus came around and showed that the sun was the central point around which everything turned, he really shook the world up. That’s what conversion does. Jesus becomes the center of our universe, all else revolves around him (which is God’s plan for us and the way we were created to live).

In the Fraternity of Priests all these points are critical. As we pray for each other and as we call each other on to fuller life in Christ and ministry in the Spirit, the goal is that we become the Peters and Pauls of today. True, the call is not unique to priests, all of us who believe in Jesus are invited to respond. But in the Fraternity our dream and vision is to challenge each other and to help equip each other so that we priests can effectively labor in the harvest where there are “so few laborers” to bring others effectively along the road to discipleship. Jesus called diverse characters then, and we surely are diverse characters today (perhaps I should capitalize the “c” on “characters”?). Just look at what God’s grace can do to those who cooperate with it!

Once again we thank you, our intercessors and benefactors—you who believe in our mission and in our priesthood. Please continue to pray for priests, especially your parish priest. The world so needs Peters and Pauls today.

Enjoy the rest of your summer.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. John".

Fr. John

continued from page 1...

distant future, the annual conference might take place in Ghana.

In an effort to learn how to organize an international conference, we attempted a National Conference from July 29 to August 3, 2002, at the Wanye center. Even though the numbers were discouraging, we still went ahead with our program for the seven that turned up. (One of the main reasons for this low turn out was surely the national voting during that week.)

Present leadership: Fr Stephen Kantubog, leader; Fr Stephen Kanngmennaah, secretary; Fr Benette Tang, treasurer.

Our 2003 Calendar

- Monthly deanery Fraternity meetings;
- February 12, June 4, November 5 -- diocesan Fraternity meetings;
- April 22 -- Fraternity picnics at deanery level;
- July/ August annual retreats.

Tomorrow—"Forward Ever"

To borrow the words of one of our post-Independence presidents: "Forward ever, backwards never." That is my wish for the Wa Fraternity.

At present, we are stocktaking. We hope to have three levels of membership: Committed, On Trial and Enquirers. On November 5, 2003, we are planning a commitment

mass with our Episcopal Liaison when we shall renew our commitment and invite new brothers to make their first commitment.

We continue to try reaching out to the other Fraternities in Ghana: Navrongo/ Bolgatanga; Tamale and Koforidua with their respective leaders: Frs. Paul Kapuochene, Gregory Kuupire and Robert Sackyi. We hope to plan another National Leaders' Conference/ Retreat soon to boost membership and introduce the Fraternity disciplines to more priests in Ghana.

Nemo dat quod non habet.
We hope to organize more

fraternity programs and even dream of sponsoring a delegate or two yearly to the international Annual Conference.

Many are the priests' groupings in our dioceses. Among them: Wa Diocesan Priests' Association, Priests' Senate, National Union of Catholic Diocesan Priests' Association, Wa-Diebouougou (Burkina Faso) Priests' Union, Tamale Ecclesiastical Provincial Priests' Associations, Priests' Deanery Monthly Recollections and the Indigenous Priests' and Religious Union of different Parishes. We have to explain time and again our need to exist also as a priests' group.

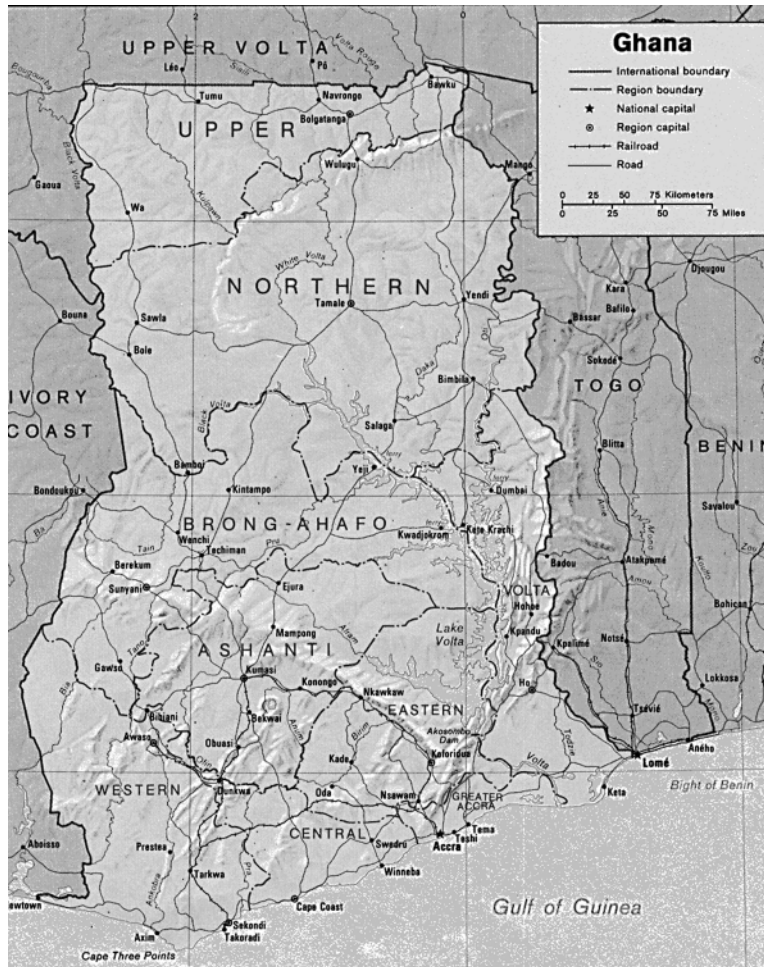
We ask your fraternal prayers. In the past year we have had some conflicts that have almost ruined us. Thanks be to God, we are growing through all that. May God bless us all in our bid to unite with His Son and with one another.

"Thank you plenty" or "elephantly"

Fraternally, yours in Christ,

Wa Fraternity.

In next month's **The Visitation**—Reports on Fraternity Conference 2003, from Riverdale, New York!



Please send us your prayer intentions: _____

THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

O Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

O Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.

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