



07-B-30

JUNIORATE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE ANALABE

The Juniorate and Rural Development Centre are situated near the town of Ambositra on the high plateau of south-central Madagascar.

More than 250,000 people live in an area of 4,000 square kilometres, making it the most densely populated part of the country. As in the rest of Madagascar, the population is mainly rural and must eke out a living from the soil of this mountainous region.

I must say straight away that this juniorate is not the result of a preconceived idea but the answer to a long felt need and to the wishes of the people. As the name indicates, this is a juniorate for young people in a rural setting.

A brief historical note to explain the origin of this establishment

Two Brothers undertook the onerous task of rural development. They started with young people who had left school for various reasons: those who did not make the grade for admission to secondary school and those who could not pay school fees because their parents had to think of younger members of the family.

Back in the bush, these young people forgot what they had learned in school and many of them could not find work. It was a question, therefore, of awakening them to their worth as persons and as potential cultivators of the land.

We began with short three-day sessions in the villages themselves. The purpose of these sessions was not only to train young men in modern methods of agriculture but also to give them confidence in themselves and an ideal for which to live and work, in a word, to take a pride in themselves as farmers. This ideal runs counter to the accepted notion that farming is a dead end.

The present situation

We have now got fifteen centres in the vicinity of Ambositra with an average of from 25 to 30 young people, boys and girls, attending each. We visit these centres every three months. A supervisor keeps in touch with the students after the sessions and monitors their progress.

To motivate the young people and to encourage them to work, we have formed small basic communities where all the members can share in decision making. They will thus be able to influence the life of the group and create a sense of solidarity among themselves which will help to make them more independent.

Our purpose is to train farmers, especially the younger ones, without taking them away from their rural environment. It is we who go to them in their villages, their fields, their rice paddies and their homes. We want to arouse their interest and direct their energies along paths that will lead to success.

That is why we are training them in the use of modern techniques in agriculture, in stock-raising, in carpentry and joinery and in building. At the same time we are trying to improve cultural and educational standards and involve them in Christian youth movements.

Why the Juniorate at Analabe?

* The Juniorate accepts young men who think they may have a religious vocation. They are mainly young peasants from our development centres whose ages range from 18 to 25 years. Their educational level is not high but they are intelligent and learn fast. They are recruited from the centres on the advice of the local priests, the Sisters and the supervisors. Conditions for admission are the following:

- Certificate of Primary Education at least,
- two consecutive years' attendance at a rural centre as well as membership of a Christian youth movement,
- two years under the guidance of a priest, a Sister or a supervisor and contact with the Brother Director of the Juniorate,
- three years' formation in the Juniorate before beginning the postulancy.

This Juniorate aims at forming these young men in their own rural environment, giving them a reasonable standard of education, and allowing them time to study their vocation. During their three years here they are expected to take responsibility for their own progress and are given a certain amount of freedom to run their own lives.

Their practical training consists in maintaining the premises, preparation of simple meals, gardening, rice growing, raising of cattle, pigs, rabbits and poultry. A small workshop is available for carpentry, repairs etc.

Their intellectual formation is taken care of by four hours of study per day with classes in Malagache, French, arithmetic, geography, natural science, agriculture, music, drawing and civility.

Religious formation is spread over three years with courses in: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Divine Office, the Psalms and prayer. Twice a week reflection and discussion take the place of formal classes to accustom these young men to community life, to the sharing of opinions and the expression of one's views. It is important to point out that traditional values are given their due place in the formation of these young Malagaches.

Other activities also form part of their formation such as:

- taking part in the work of the Christian Rural Youth Movement,
- helping the physically and mentally handicapped in a neighbouring centre,
- animation of community prayers and Masses,
- retreats and days of recollection.

Conclusion: Juniorate in the country or Juniorate for country youth

It is decidedly a Juniorate for country youth. Our task is to form young men who will become Brothers, capable of undertaking work in the several sectors of the Institute's activities: rural development, craft teaching, publication of books, farm management etc. In a word, "to do anything at which they shall be employed" in and for the Institute.

In the course of the present year (1985) two of these young men who have been members of the Christian Rural Youth Movement for three years, have attended the development centre for one year and spent three years in the Juniorate, are thinking of entering the District novitiate.

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