

AN EXPERIENCE OF EVANGELIZATION

I) CHRONOLOGY

For four years now in Togo and more recently in Equatorial Guinea, missionary experiences in evangelization have been taking place. They are similar in their general objectives but distinct in the specifics as we'll try to show further on in this article.

II) PROJECT SITES

As has already been stated, these projects were undertaken in Africa, concretely in Togo, Upper Volta and Equatorial Guinea.

III) PROJECT RESOURCES

Human Resources: The majority of the participants have been De La Salle Brothers who have wished to evangelize and be evangelized by the Third World. Normally, different persons comprised each year's teams so that the number of those sent has already reached some three-hundred.

Together with the religious men and women, young people of both sexes have been chosen and have worked under the supervision of the religious.

Material Resources: The biggest budgetary items had to do with construction as well as travel expenses. School supplies and medicines were generally brought along.

IV) OBJECTIVES

General Objectives:

- To place oneself at the service of others.
- To create a sense of community among peoples that have been forgotten, outside the "mainstream", "marginated". To point up interests that will move them to unite their efforts in solidarity for their own promotion.

- To cooperate with the local Church in the establishment and consolidation of the Kingdom of Christ.

- To sensitize and awaken the ones sent to the problems of the Third World and the Missions.

Specific Objectives:

- The updating of teachers and catechists.
- The tutoring of suspended students enabling them to make up their grade.
- The tutoring of students who are behind in their school work.
- Catechetics in the villages.
- Liturgical animation in the villages.
- First Aid in hygiene and sanitation.
- The experience of living with the native people.
- Social promotion.
- The construction of chapels, schools and social centers.

V) CRITERIA FOR BRINGING THE PROJECTS ABOUT

1. Criterion of "fulfillment". Cf. "Ad gentes Divinitus".
2. Criterion of CHURCH. "In communion with the local Church".
3. Criterion of "Inculturation".
4. Criterion of "Group", Team, Christian Community.
5. Criterion of "Viability". Work that can really be done.
6. Criterion of "Being" as opposed to "Doing".
7. Criterion of "Evaluation".

VI) DIFFICULTIES IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROJECTS

1. The geographical location and the climate.
2. The precarious situation of housing for the groups.
3. The lack, at times, of the most elementary human necessities.
4. The different mentality of the Western world and that of the African.
5. The insufficient knowledge of the psychology and customs of the peoples to whom we were sent.
6. Frequently, the ignorance of the languages, on both sides.

Most of these problems were resolved:

- a) through the generosity and commitment of the ones sent;
- b) through the welcome and the receptivity of the natives.

VII) TESTIMONIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

- We have reached a greater personal sensitivity in dealing with people who are poor, but who are, at the same time, extremely hospitable and affectionate.

- The contact and the contrast with the culture of poverty has enriched us when we came to place a value on the things that we possess and our wealth.

- The Eucharists that we lived in the villages revealed to us the piety and the religiosity of the African people.

- The satisfaction of having set up a social center for the human promotion of the "Gourmanché" women.

- The experience of our own teamwork has been very positive for us and for the native people.

- The experience with native teachers has been highly positive, both on the human and the educational planes.

- The work has been one of mutual conversion, both for the Brothers and the Natives. Here the spirit of union reached very sincere, simple and cordial relations.

- The openness of the natives and their proverbial welcome to us will not be forgotten.

VIII) PRACTICAL RESULTS

With regard to the human, social and evangelical good that came about with the native; and with regard to the constructions that remained behind us, we will mention:

1. The TESTIMONY which the "Ones Sent" have given to the natives. In Togo, they have noted the increased numbers of pagans that have been attending the Christian chapels, built during the summer. The fact that "white men" did this sort of work has been a source of admiration. There must be something great behind all of this!

2. The youth, the lay teachers, upon returning from the experience, have become apostles of the missions in their milieux and in their classrooms.

3. As a De La Salle Brother, I can attest to the fact that in my Institute, because of these mission experiences there has been a real flowering of a movement in favor of the Missions — and this on every level — Superiors, Brothers and students. What is being offered for the Third World is noteworthy and of optimum quality.

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