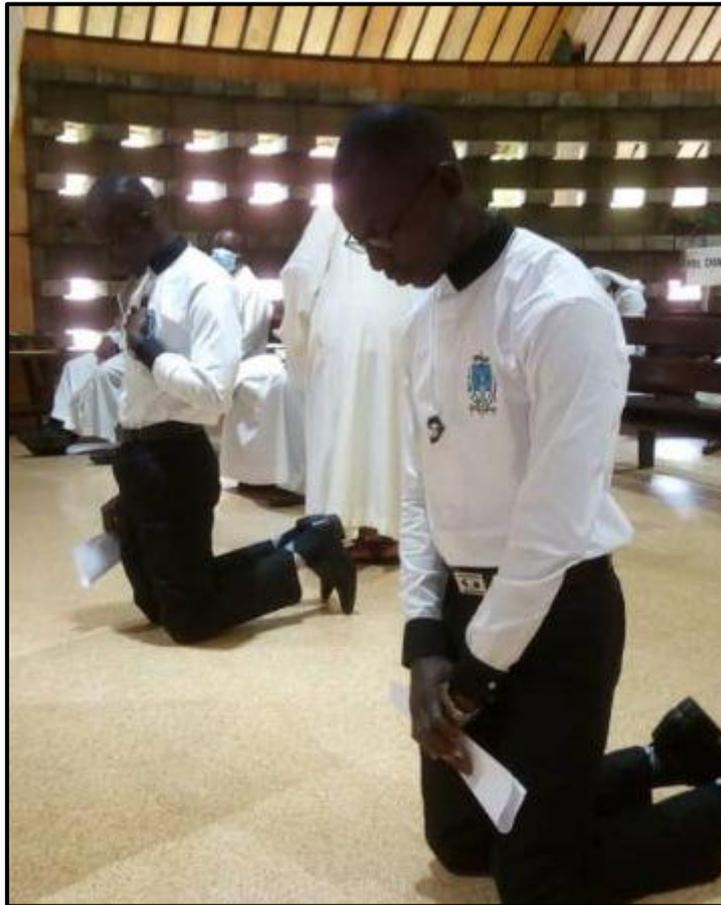




## VIA LATINA 22 # 292 - July 2020

News from the General Administration - Society of Mary

### First Vows in Ivory Coast



On Saturday 27th June, concluding two years of preparation at the novitiate in Abadjin-Doumé, Ivory Coast, two brothers pronounced their first vows in the Society of Mary. The newest Marianist religious are Ghislain ATANDELE SIMANABATO, from the Congo Sector and Eric KOUAME Kouassi, from the District of Ivory Coast. In the context created by the pandemic, the ceremony took place in the novitiate itself, in the presence of the brothers of the neighboring communities and members of the

Marianist Family.

The ceremony was presided over by Fr. François Nanan, SM. The District Superior, Fr. Georges Gbeze, SM, received the vows by delegation from the Provincial of France. We wish the two new brothers a wonderful beginning to their Marianist life. May it be an opportunity for them to be rooted ever more in their vocation and their commitment to the service of the mission that has been entrusted to us in the service of the People of God.

## In Prayerful Union

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to weigh on our world, we remain in union of prayer and hope with all those who suffer from this evil, the sick and those who care for them, their families and all collateral victims, especially among the poorest and most deprived populations. We are praying with the areas most affected at the moment, especially on the American continent or in India. Let us also ask the Lord for the knowledge how to act as he calls us to, according to our vocation and our means.

*When "The globalization of indifference ... continue to threaten and tempt us in our journey... May we find within us the necessary antibodies of justice, charity and solidarity. We must not be afraid to live the alternative – the civilization of love. This is «a civilization of hope: against anguish and fear, sadness and discouragement, passivity and tiredness. The civilization of love is built daily, uninterruptedly. It requires a committed effort by all. For this reason it requires a committed community of brothers and sisters»". (Interview of Pope Francis in Vida Nueva, April 17, 2020; the quotation made by the Pope is from the Argentinean Cardinal Eduardo Pironio).*

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## International Meeting of Office of Temporalities in July



Nearly a year ago, the General Council announced a meeting of Assistants for Temporalities to be held during July 2020. This meeting, in keeping with the orientations from the XXXV General Chapter, was to be held in Rome. Assistants were also invited to bring another person who worked in that office, if they wished.

Obviously, the pandemic has prevented this meeting from taking place as planned. Nevertheless, in an attempt to achieve, at least, some of its goals, a series of virtual meetings will be held from July 6-11 by language groups. Each group will meet over the course of two days, for three hours each day. There will be two separate English groups, and one group each for Spanish and French. Because the meetings are being held virtually, Assistants are free to invite other participants for whom the subjects of the meeting might be pertinent.

Topics to be discussed will include: the General Finance Directory; the Patrimonium Project currently underway throughout the SM; Solidarity and Stability; and Accountability. All of these topics were important points raised by the General Chapter, as well as topics of interest raised by the experience of visitations and dialog between the Unit Administrations and the General Administration.

While we would have preferred to have the opportunity for expanded discussion and fraternal support afforded by meeting in person, as first planned, we have strong hopes that this meeting will be helpful for the participants and serve to reinforce the ongoing dialog between offices and administrations for the wise and prudent stewardship of our common patrimony, the sustenance of our religious and mission, and the of JPIC to God's people.

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## 100 years ago, Jakob Gapp joined the Society of Mary...

Life is full of events, encounters and highlights. Opening the book of one's life sometimes allows us to find a hidden meaning in it, a particular resonance that gives meaning to today.

It was Jakob Gapp's experience on August 13, 1943 in the Berlin prison of Plötzensee, which served as a reminder of that very same summer day in a previous year, a happier day, a day that would be fully brought to completion in the sacrifice of his life: *"On August 13, 1920, I began my novitiate, the most beautiful year of my life, and today I hope to be able to begin the life of blessed eternity."*



Born on July 26, 1897 in Wattens, Austrian Tyrol. He was not yet 18 when he volunteered to defend his homeland in 1915. After the war and the prison camp, this 23-year-old young man wanted to enter religious life with as much ardor as he had displayed during his military commitment. He was a man of great frankness and when he went to Freistadt to meet the provincial, as he got off the train, he announced to the religious who came to pick him up: "Here I am, I'm a socialist and I want to be a priest. If you don't agree, tell me right now, and I'll go home."

Jakob was admitted to the novitiate at Greisinghof where he arrived on August 13, 1920. It was a beginning that foreshadowed an end yet unknown. Who would have thought that 23 years later, on the same day of the calendar, it would be Jakob's day of offering the totality of his life?

In this man full of ideals, the search for truth was constant. It was in this spirit that he began his studies to become a priest: "When I entered the seminary in 1925, at the age of 28, I said to myself with great conviction: during these years of study, I will only be able to adhere to what I really feel, for I must not believe half or out of obligation in the dogmas of the Church. I will only be able to speak about my faith to others in a truly convincing way if that faith has really penetrated me and is really mine..." It is also in this spirit that he conversed at length with his teachers to understand, verify

and deepen his knowledge.

During the rise of National Socialism, he scrutinized this ideology and was now convinced of one thing: National Socialism is incompatible with the Christian faith. This conviction became a struggle that he shared with his students and all those he met, including from the pulpit in his native village. He becomes an outlaw and was followed by the Gestapo. Then, exiled in France and then in Spain, he was misunderstood.

At the moment when he was about to give the supreme testimony of his life, he wrote to Father Jung, Vicar General of the Society of Mary who was replacing the deceased Superior General (a letter that would remain in the file of his conviction in Berlin and would not be found until years later). You can read or reread it (see box below).

Let us not forget to remember him and trust in his intercession.

*Plötzensee, August 13, 1943*

*Venerable and dear Superior,*

*A few hours before my death, I feel the need to say goodbye to you as well. I was sentenced to death for treason on July 2, the feast of the Sacred Heart. The execution will take place tonight at 7:00.*

*During the time of my captivity, since November 9 of last year, I have had ample time to reflect on my life.*

*I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all the good you have done me since I have known you.*

*I still consider myself a member of the Society of Mary; I renew my vows and offer myself to God through the hands of our dear Heavenly Mother.*

*Forgive me for any trouble I may have caused you. I went through some very difficult times; but now I am perfectly happy. I think these hard times have sanctified me.*

*Please give my regards to all the confreres. I will greet those who are already up there. Everything passes, except heaven.*

*On August 13, 1920, I began my novitiate, the most beautiful year of my life, and today I hope to be able to begin the life of blessed eternity.*

*Goodbye! Pray for me. I am praying for you. We will meet again!*

*Yours very much and very grateful in J.M.J.*

*Jakob*

## **G.A. Communications recently sent**

- **Death Notices: # 14-16**
- **June 9 *Extended General Council***, in three languages, to the Presidents of Zonal Conferences, sent by Fr. André-Joseph Fétis, SM, Superior General.

## **Address Changes**

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