

WORLD MARIANIST DAY OF PRAYER

A MARIAN SANCTUARY, OUR LADY OF LAKE TOGO, MOTHER OF MERCY
Togoville, Togo - October 14, 2012



Prayer to Our Lady of the Lake-Togo, Mother of Mercy

Holy Mary, Mother of God! With all our hopes we come to your feet to invoke you under the name of Our Lady of Lake Togo, Mother of Mercy. We are brought here by God's Providence, who never errs in his plans.

Recognizing obscurely the signs of his grace, our ancestors established this city of Togoville as the dwelling-place of the Rainbow, which Yahweh himself, after the Flood, had set in the now peaceful sky as a sign of covenant between himself and the earth...and also as the dwelling place of the water of reconciliation and of pardon.

Today, O good Mother, you are the great sign placed in this shrine to bring down upon us God's kindness. Through kindness and wisdom, he has given us his own Son as Redeemer and Savior. How can he not, through you and with him, grant us every favor?

I fly to your protection and implore you in my present needs. O Mother of Mercy, look upon me and have mercy on me, for I am alone and miserable. See my misery and my pain. May your mercy drive far away from me every danger to my soul and body and give me peace and joy. Amen.

A Marian Sanctuary, Our Lady of the Lake Togo Mother of Mercy

History: 50 years ago, on September 14, the first three Marianists arrived in Togo to undertake a mission which, in the words of the Swiss provincial at the time who sent them, was "the work of our hearts." "This new chapter of Divine Love in history" began with a pilgrimage by our "*Drei Eidgnossen*" [three confederates], according to the expression of one of them, to Togoville to the mythical shrine of the Mother of All Mercies. Here is a bit of the history of that shrine:

Miayi to godo: "we shall go to the other side of the river": from these words Togoville was born. History tells us that it was the military leader, Gala, who with these words had succeeded in leading his people, stage by stage, from Notse (a town in the south of Togo) all the way to the sea. They traveled along the bank of the Mono River and passed by the lagoons. Later, Gala explored the northern edge of the lake (now named Lake Togo), which appears like a rugged range of hills, and invited his group to build their village in the shelter of those hills. The name "Togo" is the abbreviation of the words "*Miayi Togodo*."

The name "Togoville," dear to the Ewe people (the largest ethnic group located in the south of the country), is one of the most important centers of their history and their traditional religion; Togoville recalls to the neighboring peoples the idea of purification; those who have faults in need of pardon come here and ask the ministers of the deity to be able to return home purified of their stains.

... why not transform the church into a shrine consecrated to the Mother of All Mercies?

Every three years, in fact, the purification of the village is celebrated in Togoville with a series of ceremonies intended to drive away sicknesses from the village and, with them, the malevolent forces that threaten human beings.

Togoville was one of the first centers of Christian preaching. On February 6, 1893, two priests came to Togoville, where the chiefs and the people were very friendly. For a very modest sum they purchased an unexpectedly beautiful plot of land; on May 24 was laid the first stone of the Togoville church. Since then, the Christian community of Togoville has never ceased growing and the beautiful church built by the Divine Word missionaries in 1910 marks the center of piety for the faithful. Built on high on the steep slopes that come down to the lake, it is visible from afar and also serves as a landmark for all those crossing the lake.

It was from the awareness of what Togoville means for the people that the inspiration came to create there a center which would also be a landmark for the Christians, a place of devotion: why not transform the church into a shrine consecrated to the Mother of All Mercies?

To Professor Michelmi, the architect of several religious buildings in Togo, was confided the task of painting a picture of the Virgin to be placed in the shrine. Once completed, the image was enthroned with great solemnity in the shrine chapel. The memory of the celebration of November 4, 1973, will remain unforgettable in the memory of every resident of Togoville. Before arriving in Togoville, the image had been exposed on the orders of the then Archbishop of Lomé, Robert Casimir Dosseh Anyron, for the veneration of the faithful in all the churches along the coast, and in all the parishes of the capital. After a prayer vigil in the Cathedral of Lomé, the holy

image was accompanied all the way to Togoville.

Here is the description of the event from *Togo-presse* (the official newspaper of Togo):

“4000 PARTICIPANTS AT THE ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY OF THE VIRGIN IN TOGOVILLE. Togoville, a lakeside city located on the north bank of Lake Togo, was the theater yesterday of an historical religious and Christian event. Almost 4000 pilgrims from Togo and abroad assisted at the solemn enthronement of Our Lady of Lake Togo, Mother of Mercy (in Ewe, *Mia Dada togotonuto, amenuveve la fe No*) in the shrine of the chapel of Togoville. During the ceremony Togo was consecrated for the second time to the Blessed Virgin. The ceremony of enthronement took place at the end of a Pontifical Mass celebrated in the open air opposite the lake, in the heart of the Catholic mission. Archbishop Robert Casimir Dosseh Anyron, of Lomé, presided, assisted by the Reverends André Anate, Vicar General, Eugène Kwaku, Bishop of Abengourou in Ivory Coast, and Father Superior Grotto, then pastor of the Togoville parish, who had organized the shrine. The choirs of Togoville and of St. Grégoire of Porto Seguro (Benin) led the singing for the Mass. Among the VIP's present for the patronal feast were outstanding representatives of the government.... The ceremony was delayed for a few hours because the number of the faithful present was much greater than had been foreseen, which required more time for the ferries to make the crossings. Although scheduled for 9:30 a.m., the ceremony only began about noon and ended about 3:00 p.m. The arrival of the Blessed Virgin at the Togoville shore was quite an event. All the spiritual leaders and priests from our sacred forests, as well as the clergy of Togoville, had come for the gathering.



Prayer for TOGO

God of our Fathers and Lord of tenderness, you who are the Lord of history, who hold in your hands the hearts of men and who guarantee the rights of peoples, you know that for the birth of our nation, all our people cried out to you.

Do not abandon the work of your hands. Togo was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of your son, forever. Take care of your vineyard, take care of your property.

Fill us with your Spirit so that all the children of our dear country, from east to west, from north to south, might recognize in one another true brothers and sisters deserving of love instead of hatred, of union instead of division.

Lord, help us by your grace to open our hearts to justice and peace instead of to injustice and violence, to pardon instead of to desire for vengeance.

May security and peace be strengthened everywhere in our land; and so may enemies in our country be reconciled, adversaries shake hands, opposing groups and families agree to walk together and love triumph over hatred.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Savior, Queen of Peace and Mother of Mercy, we turn our eyes to you also, you to whom our dear Togo has been consecrated since its independence. You whom the Togolese invoke under various titles throughout our country, you to whom Pope John Paul II solemnly confirmed our consecration in your Togoville shrine, drive all evil away from us and, like a mother, gather your Togolese children together; may they finally be united to work generously at the building of the earthly city in its march towards the heavenly city. Amen!

All you holy men and women of God, pray for us!

May the Lord, the Master of Life, grant his blessing upon Togo, upon its leaders and upon all its children. Amen!



... from that great day onwards, the visits to the shrine of Togoville to venerate the image of Mary have never been interrupted.

As it was disembarked from the canoe, the image of Our Lady of Lake Togo was received at the lakeshore by Chief Jean Mlapa of Togoville. A rich escort of priests, nuns and delegations of various Marian sodalities of Lomé accompanied it.

Then came the pious procession towards the Mission, amidst the rejoicing of the people, after a libation ceremony in honor of the Blessed Virgin performed by the traditional chiefs. There was a numerous, joyful, loud and multicolored crowd in the public area. On Lake Togo, boats and canoes were leaving empty and returning full. The goings-and-comings of the boats continued all day long.

The boats brought to the city of Togoville both natives and foreigners; and the ceremony of enthronement itself was marked by readings of litanies of the Blessed Virgin to the sound of *atopani* tom-toms and *ta vugâ*. The image, borne by the members of the central committee for the organization of the celebrations, finally reached the chapel where the committee members venerated it, followed by the delegations of the traditional chiefs, of representatives of the government, and of various VIP's. Then came the crowd of the faithful. And that was the end of the beautiful and impressive ceremony. After a picnic, the area emptied out little by little. But Our Lady of Lake Togo will remain there with open arms to welcome from now on all those who have recourse to her."

From that great day onwards, the visits to the shrine of Togoville to venerate the ima-

ge of Mary have never been interrupted. On the contrary, they have increased. Simple pilgrims, groups of young people, associations, students, the sick, people of all ages and all classes go to Togoville. Many leave their prayers in a letter, as though to guarantee that their expectation will not be disappointed.

On August 9, 1985, Pope John Paul II went to Togoville, solemnly confirming the Togolese as belonging to Our Lady of Lake Togo, Mother of Mercy.

Since 1994 the shrine has been the property of the Diocese of Aného, which was created on July 1, 1994, by Pope John Paul II, who encouraged people to revere the memory of that day.

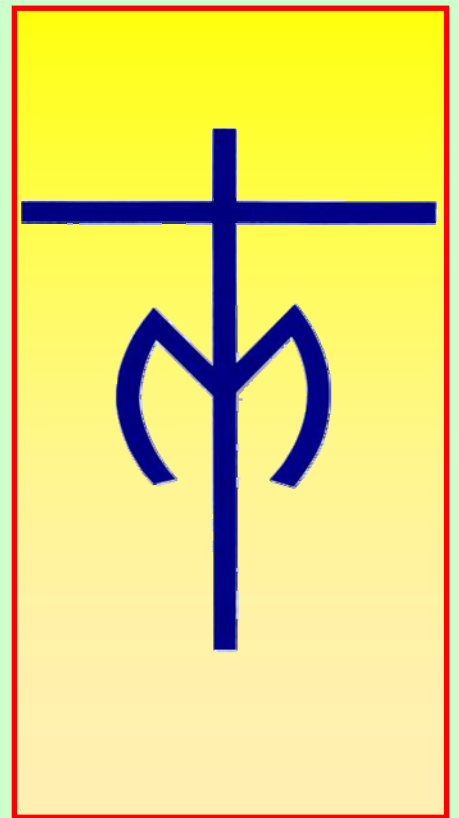




Prayers Intentions

- **For the three first Marianist missionaries** : Bro. Auguste Augustin, Fr. Stephan HOIN, Bro. Pierre CATTIN.
- **For all the Marianists ...** who have worked and now work in Togo.
- **For the young Diocese of Aného.**
- **For its first two bishops, now dead** : Bishop Victor KOKOEVI HOUNAKE (+1995), Bishop Paul Jean-Marie DOM DOSSAVI (+2005)
- **For the current Bishop:** Isaac Jogues GAGLO (consecrated February 2, 2008)
- **For the Mother of Mercy ...** might obtain peace and reconciliation among the children of Togo;
- **For the families ...** in great hardship because of the high cost of living and due to the floods of July-August 2008 in Togo
- **For all the Marianists in the world, lay and consecrated ...** that their missionary spirit be upheld by a living faith, an overflowing hope and a humble and active charity.
- **That our spiritual Family might grow ...** and offer to the Church and to the world a spectacle of Saints.

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