

December, 2016

Dear Friends,

Ne wokafu Yesu Kristo! which means, in the Ewe language of southern Togo, **Praised be Jesus Christ!**

I'm happy to once again provide this photo report to update you on the activities of our mission. It's been a while since my last report, and a lot has happened.

We have been making steady progress over the past three years in the construction of our new parish church. Here's a picture:



The contractor has now set a target date of May, 2017 to complete the church. It hasn't been easy hauling all the building materials to our mission over the bad roads – gravel, cement and all the rest – but with perseverance and the generosity of so many people back home we are getting there. The parishioners here have been contributing, too. Six times a year we have a special collection for the church construction here at the mission and at all our secondary stations. The people are very excited and are looking forward to making the transition from our mud chapel in the village.

During my last visit home I was able to obtain from Mexico a laser-printed, authenticated image of Our Lady of Guadalupe that will be placed behind the altar of our new church. Here you can see it being framed. We placed the special cloth between two large pieces of glass that we then sealed with silicone to avoid all problems with insects. So it should be fine for many, many years.



During this past year, we received a generous donation that enabled us to install small-bore wells and pumps in three of our villages, Abidikope, Dafolenyame and Wodome. Before we did the well at Abidikope the people were forced to walk almost a mile each way to bring back dirty water from the Zio river for their families. Here's a photo of the chief pumping the first bucket of clean water from the well at Abidikope, and another one of a delegation from Abidikope that came to the mission the next day with thank you gifts of peanuts and a bag of pineapples.



Here is a video of the people at Abidikope celebrating the new well with their traditional song and dance.

[Link to Well Dancing Video](https://youtu.be/_JLDUf4OaJ0) -> https://youtu.be/_JLDUf4OaJ0

The “presbytère” (rectory) here is very full this year. In October Martin Apeto, a newly ordained deacon was assigned to the parish. If all goes well Martin will be ordained to the priesthood in one year, and there is a possibility that he would then remain here as assistant pastor. And I was glad when I received the news that the vocation director for the Archdiocese of Lomé granted my request to send me three “stagiaires” (pre-seminarians) to spend their pastoral year helping here at the mission before they enter the major seminary in Lomé in October of 2017. Here is a picture of Isaac, Parfait, Hugh, and Deacon Martin (l-r in the back), surrounded by some of the young catechumens whom they teach. That’s a three-year program followed by a year of preparation for Confirmation. We now have over 600 young people and adults preparing for the sacraments in all our villages, and we recently began a more intensive formation program for our catechists in cooperation with three neighboring parishes.



Here's a photo of Deacon Martin carrying the Blessed Sacrament at our recent Christ the King procession. You can see the confetti that was thrown during the procession.



Our parish schools are growing steadily. We now have nearly 1,200 students in our schools at the mission in Atchanve and in five other villages. We have patiently built these schools one classroom per year over the past few years as the students have moved up to their next grades.

Here is a photo of the entire student body at the grade school here at the mission in Atchanvé:



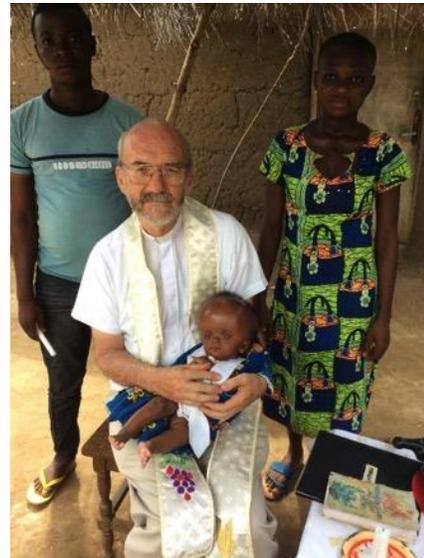
In my last report, I told you about the “collège” (7th through 10th grades) that we were building at the mission so that our graduates from our primary schools (K through 6th) could continue their Catholic education. Unlike at our primary schools, for this beautiful collège we were able to build all four classrooms all at once instead of year by year. We already have 105 students enrolled just in our 7th and 8th grades. In the next two years, we will fill the remaining two classrooms. Here are photos of last year’s student body (7th graders) and this year’s 7th and 8th graders:



A few months ago the Archbishop of Lomé installed seven of our catechists as “Fidei Custos”, or Extraordinary Ministers of Communion. It’s a real step forward for us, because it has allowed us to extend the reach of the Eucharist throughout our vast parish territory. Two of these catechists come to the mission by motorcycle very early Sunday morning to pick up enough consecrated hosts to take to the secondary stations of the other Extraordinary Ministers who are authorized to distribute Communion in their chapels.



Our medical clinic is able to provide basic low-cost medical service to the people in this area, but once in a while we have a case that requires more expensive help at a hospital in Lomé. We were able to provide the funds for a successful operation for this hydrocephalic child named Jacqueline whom I baptized just before she had her surgery. I was delighted to hear that the operation was a success. The swelling is slowly going down, and she should be fine.



A while back I sent some pictures of the “Bridge over the River Zio” – which at the time was just some felled trees that with difficulty could be walked across to get to Avego, one of our villages on the other side. I’m happy to report that the village chief paid for some planks to improve the situation. I can now even drive my all-terrain vehicle over this new bridge (slowly!).



Not too long ago I went to Avego to baptize and give First Communion to the elderly lady on the right. The lady on the left also received Communion – if you look closely you can see what leprosy did to her hands. But she has faith, and she knows that the Bread of Life that she received is our Lord’s pledge to her that all will be restored and made well in His kingdom.



I hope this gives you an idea of the progress we are making as a result of your prayers, your sacrifices, and of course your donations. We can really use some contributions at this time. For information on how to make a donation, online or by check, that I promise you will be well spent, please click on the [DONATE](#) button on the home page. Thanks, and God bless,

Fr. William Ryan

[Link to togomissionparish.org](http://togomissionparish.org)