



August 30, 2009

My dear friends,

On Tuesday, September 8, I will return to Burkina Faso and I am most grateful to the Pastor, Fr. Dennis Cohan, for the opportunity to express, via this message, my gratitude to him and to all of you for the wonderful experience I have had among you. Many have opened their hearts to me with favors, rides to sightsee, trips to New York, Atlantic City, Atlantic Highland, shopping. I am especially grateful to those who have invited me into their homes.

Now I would like to tell you a little about my home in Burkina Faso in Africa and my mission there. While exact statistics on religion in Burkina Faso are not available and vary widely, the Government of Burkina Faso estimated in its most recent census (1996) that approximately 60 percent of the population practice Islam, 24 percent of the population maintains traditional indigenous beliefs, 17 percent practices Roman Catholicism, and 3 percent are members of various Protestant denominations. With only 17 percent practicing Catholicism, it is vitally important for us to evangelize and educate the people who will bring the Gospel to their villagers.

Economically, Burkina Faso has one of the lowest GDP per capita incomes in the world: \$1,084 per year and per household. The Human Poverty Index ranks Burkina Faso 131st among 135 developing countries. Unemployment causes a high rate of emigration. For example, three million citizens of Burkina Faso live in Ivory Cost. A large part of the economic activity of the country is funded by international aid.

MY STUDIES IN ROME

Education remains the most important need of the Country. I am very blessed for the high education I received these past five years in Rome. You may already know that I received a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) in Moral Theology from the Pontifical University of Santa Croce, following successful

defense and (partial) publication of my dissertation, “The Moral Virtues As Principles of Practical Reason According To Saint Thomas Aquinas.” This achievement is the crowning of God’s grace to me during these past five years of labor and study. I was honored to graduate Summa Cum Laude from Santa Croce, at which I previously earned my licentiate. I was also able to earn a Master’s degree in Bioethics (Magna Cum Laude) at the Pontifical Athenaeum of Regina Apostolorum.

MISSION IN BURKINA FASO

Back to Burkina Faso, I’ll spend precious time with my mom, my sister and 2 brothers before starting my assignment as the Diocesan Director of Catechists Education Center. I humbly ask for your prayers that I remain fully open to God’s abundant graces and diligently serve my native Church, and to share with wisdom and generosity the fruits of the intensive cultural, intellectual, spiritual and human enrichment I enjoyed while abroad.

I would like to tell you a little about my assignment so that you may pray with insight for me and for my ministry. To begin, despite my extensive education, my ministry is not primarily academic, but rather very practical and pastoral. As the principal of catechists’ education, I have primary responsibility not only for religious and spiritual formation of catechists, but for their vocational training and human development as well. This is due to the unique role of catechists in Burkina Faso, which is very different from catechists in the West. In my country, catechists are men and women who are literally on the front line of day-to-day spiritual and religious formation of the majority of people living in numerous small villages outside the few large cities. Because of the number of villages and the difficulty of traveling, priests do not reside in any one village, but say Mass and celebrate sacraments on a rotating basis among the villages. Therefore it is the catechists living among the villagers who daily build up Christian faith and community among the people.

This is a critical ministry for the continued vitality of the faith in Burkina Faso, as the villagers are the “seed bed” for future priestly and religious vocations. Also, just as St. Paul provided for his own financial needs as a tent-maker, so the catechists provide for themselves as subsistence farmers or by practicing other indigenous trades. Preparing catechists to be self-

sufficient, while leading Christian formation will be my principal responsibility.

Last year, 105 singles and 130 couples with their 45 children began the four-year long process of formation and training, under the guidance of 42 supervisors, 3 religious friars and 1 priest. All the students - couples, children and singles - live in the Education Center. The student catechists are representative of the laity, fervently faithful yet lacking high-school level education. The Center itself is like a village, removed from the city and lacking adequate electricity (only 4 hours a day), no running water, no modern transportation, no communications not even television. Therefore I will experience first hand what most priests in my country encounter. It will be nothing like the life to which I've been accustomed as a seminary instructor and doctoral student.

I will rely on God's grace and on your prayers to fulfill my new mission with humility, faith and charity. As I learn first-hand the needs of the Center and of the students, I will communicate these to you for your prayerful consideration.

At the moment I know the following: to support my pastoral work both now and later, I will need a car. My ministry will not be only teaching but will require traveling distances that are not possible without an automobile. For example I will need to travel between distant parishes in order to promote and oversee catechist vocations. Moreover, while I am assigned to the Center I will be responsible for providing transportation to hospitals and doctors and also to market centers to meet most of the daily needs of the catechists as well as the needs of Muslim and Animist neighbors which cannot be met in the small village where we are located. In other words, a car is required in order for me to meet the basic responsibilities of this position.

Again, I am thankful to God for you, and I ask Him to bless abundantly your life and all that you do for Him and for your neighbor.

God bless you,

Fr. Alphonse Kaboré, Email: alkabo2000@yahoo.fr

My address in Burkina Faso (I'll check my emails whenever I go to the city. Sending or receiving postal mail may take 2 weeks).

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For those who have asked, tax deductible donations may be made payable to the Knights Of Columbus, Padre Pio Council, PO Box 647, Great Falls, VA 22066, with a notation: For Fr. Alphonse Kaboré.

