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Dominicans in Africa

A History of the Dominican Friars in sub-Saharan Africa

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Nigeria and Ghana¹

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As early as 1946, Archbishop David Mathew, the apostolic delegate to English-speaking East and West Africa, whose headquarters were at Mombasa, took steps to secure the presence of Dominicans in West Africa. A brother of the Dominican Gervase Mathew, he was particularly interested in having the friars start a centre of higher studies in philosophy and theology for the emerging African elite and in their giving retreats to priests and religious in Nigeria and Ghana. After weighing the merits of Accra, Ibadan and Lagos, on 4 October 1949 he wrote to Edward Hughes, the provincial of the province of St Albert the Great, asking him to send friars to Lagos.

He also asked if the Dominicans would take a mission prefecture in the province of Sokoto, in northern Nigeria. On 26 October 1949, Hughes replied that, before giving any answer, he would first visit Lagos. His visit in November 1949, with E. M. Cuddy, was the first of five visits to Nigeria that he was to make. On 16 January 1950 the provincial council unanimously approved the Lagos foundation, and, in the following months, detailed negotiations were carried out. Archbishop Mathew was anxious for the Dominicans to arrive in time for the international Eucharistic congress beginning on 19 February 1951 in Kumasi, on the Gold Coast (as Ghana was then called). All the interested parties would be present, and the future apostolates of the Dominicans could be discussed.

Nigeria at that time was part of the British empire and ruled by a governor general appointed by the British monarch. It was not only the first time that Dominicans entered Nigeria, but also the first American Catholic venture into that territory. Nigeria consisted of three regions: the north, the west and the east, and of hundreds of tribes and languages. Catholic evangelisation

¹ Revised version of a document compiled by Joseph Kenny: *The Dominicans in Nigeria 25 years*, Chicago, December 1975, 61 pp.

had been pioneered by the Society of African Missions in the west and the north, and the Holy Ghost Fathers in the east. Before the arrival of the Dominicans, Irish Augustinians were working in the north-east. Catholics dominated in the Igbo East, but were a small minority in most other places. Islam dominated the far north and was strong in the west. Anglicans were the leading Protestant denomination, followed by the Baptists, the Methodists and various evangelical missions such as the Sudan Interior Mission and the Sudan United Mission.

The first three friars, Michael Dempsey, Thaddeus Lawton and Arthur Kinsella, flew with Hughes from Ghana to Lagos on 27 February 1951. "For the first week," wrote Dempsey, "we were quartered, and in a sense drawn, at Services Inn, a stopover haven for transient missionaries. Here we did time, while the provincial, the archbishop of Lagos and the apostolic delegate discussed our future in Nigeria." On 28 February Archbishop Taylor wrote a formal invitation to the Dominicans to take responsibility for the Yaba mission, a new place on the outskirts of Lagos, which had not yet been erected as a parish. "The purpose of the coming of the Dominicans," Archbishop Taylor said, "is the establishment of a Thomistic Institute, a project suggested by the apostolic delegate. The Dominicans would also give retreats in Nigeria and the Gold Coast."

Moving to Yaba on 4 March 1951, the three men were from the start most insistent on their common religious life, and carried out the complete prayer schedule prescribed by the constitutions of the Order. To help their common life and to take another step in the establishment of the Order in Africa, they obtained permission from the Sacred Congregation of Religious to establish their community as a formal house on 21 May 1951.

In the meantime, the apostolic delegate had not forgotten his original offer of the mission prefecture. On 18 May 1951 he renewed his request to the provincial. Thereupon, in June, Lawton made a tour of the Sokoto province with Watson, a member of the Society of African Missions, and reported on the kind of work which awaited the Dominicans there. On 21 December 1951, Archbishop Mathew again wrote to Hughes

about the prefecture, adding the Katsina province to it and requesting American sisters. "No question he is a pusher," remarked Hughes. In January 1952, the provincial council met and approved in principle the acceptance of the Sokoto-Katsina prefecture.

Hughes then contacted the Dominican congregation of the Immaculate Conception, Great Bend, Kansas, and, immediately, twelve sisters volunteered for the work in Africa. To see the territory at first hand Edward Hughes, Peter O'Brien, Mother Aloysia and Sister Benigna went on an exploratory trip, arriving in Lagos on 2 February 1953. They saw Kaduna, Gusau, Sokoto, Katsina and Kano, where they left on a plane for Rome on 25 February. Both the friars and the sisters agreed to go ahead. On 29 June 1953, the prefecture of Sokoto was established, and, on 15 January 1954, Lawton was appointed prefect apostolic. By then, the enterprising apostolic delegate was given a different assignment. Before leaving, he wrote to Hughes on 1 July 1953:

The coming of the Dominicans to Nigeria has been one of the most important long-term developments that have been begun during my years in Africa.

FROM THE YABA HOUSE TO THE PROVINCE OF NIGERIA

In the beginning, Yaba was simply a house of the province with Michael Dempsey as superior. When the Sokoto prefecture was established, the friars were simply assigned to Mgr Lawton. But, with more men going to the north, it was necessary to organise them in relation to the Order, since Mgr Lawton was, like a bishop, answerable only to the pope. On 23 September 1957, Dempsey was made vicar of the provincial for all the Dominicans in Nigeria. In deference to this change of status, Nigeria was called a vicariate.

Because of bad roads and the difficulty of communication, on 18 October 1959 Victor Nadeau was appointed vicar for the north, leaving Dempsey responsible for the south. On 30 June 1963, the north and the south were reunited as one vicariate under Nadeau, who continued in the office of vicar provincial

until he became rector of the major seminary in Ibadan on 27 August 1965. On the same day, Dempsey became the new vicar provincial, and in the beginning of November he moved to the north. Just before this, in February 1965, the Order of Preachers was officially incorporated in Nigeria.

When Dempsey went home on leave on 20 January 1967, he left Giles Klapperich his vicar for the south and Bede Jagoe his vicar for the north. Dempsey was made bishop on 15 August 1967 and on 17 August Klapperich was appointed pro-vicar provincial. It was then decided to establish a formal vicariate, modelled on the organisation of a province, but still dependent on the province of St Albert the Great for the confirmation of elections and statutes, etc. A preliminary meeting of all the men present in the vicariate was held in March 1968. The first vicariate chapter was held in three sessions: on 2-6 December 1968, on 24 February 1969 and on 9-11 September 1969. At the second session, Bert Ebben was elected vicar provincial, and the election was confirmed by the provincial. At that time, the Nigerian mission became a territorial vicariate of the St Albert's province. In the beginning, a chapter was to be held each year, with the presence of all the brethren in solemn vows. Accordingly, the second chapter was held on 26-28 May 1970, the third on 26 August to 2 Sept 1971, the fourth on 12-14 Sept 1972 and the fifth on 12-15 February 1973. At this chapter Bert Ebben was re-elected and it was decided to hold a chapter only every two years. Ebben resigned his office before the sixth chapter, which was held on 28 April to 2 May 1975. At this chapter, Ambrose Windbacher was elected vicar provincial. He was re-elected in 1979, and was succeeded by Callistus IHEME on 25 February 1983.

In 1985, the vicariate of Nigeria was promoted to the level of a vice-province, with Callistus IHEME continuing as the first vice-provincial. On 25 April 1989, Gilbert Thesing was elected vice-provincial. The next chapter, in 1993, petitioned the master of the Order to elevate the vice-province to the level of a province. This was granted, and Africa saw its first Dominican province, with Chris Angelo Otube as its first provincial. On 8 July 1997, Thomas McDermott was elected the second provincial.

THE YABA PARISH²

When the Dominicans took over the Yaba station, the area was undeveloped bushland on the outskirts of Lagos. There was a small mud church, a fair-sized school, and a two-story house for the friars. The whole section was dedicated to St Patrick. In 1953, the parish was entrusted permanently to the Order and its name was changed to St Dominic's.

The Lagos to which the Dominicans came was a rapidly changing and growing city. The little old church was entirely inadequate and, on 31 July 1955, the soil was turned to begin a new church. The cornerstone was laid on 13 November, and on 5 August 1956 St Dominic's church was blessed by Archbishop Taylor. A new house in the front of the compound was started early in 1962 and occupied by the end of June 1963, while the grand old, but inadequate mission house in the centre of the compound was torn down.

The growth of St Dominic's parish demanded more and more from the Dominican community serving it, and forced a cutback in other activities. The Thomistic Institute, which had been so well served by Thaddeus Lawton, Arthur Kinsella, Victor Nadeau and James McHatton, proved unsuited to the needs of the educated Nigerian youth. Academics were needed instead. Since the friars could provide none, and the American Jesuits could, the Thomistic Institute was abandoned. The Dominicans also had less free time for retreats. The Jesuits obliged in filling this need too.

The demand for religious radio programmes continued, and the Dominicans always managed to contribute in this area which is so important in Africa. The experience of the friars in Yaba placed them, particularly Dempsey, much in demand as counsellors to the archbishop, especially for solving the canonical intricacies of marriage problems. This was true under Archbishop Taylor and also under his African successor Archbishop Aggey, who was ordained as auxiliary on 4 August 1957 and succeeded as archbishop on 27 October 1965. He died on

² On the history of the Yaba parish see *A house of worship for the Lord. A dedication book for the New St Dominic's Catholic Church, Yaba, Lagos*, St Dominic's Catholic Church, 1995, 145 pp.

13 March 1972, and after some time was succeeded by Archbishop Anthony Okojie.

To face the growing social problems of the people, especially after the civil war, Stephen Lucas organised a children's clinic and an employment reference service. He then laid plans for a social-service building which the donor agency, *Misereor* funded. The cornerstone was laid on 1 October 1975. It contains facilities for a clinic, a library for students who need a quiet place to prepare for their examinations, and meeting rooms. The building of the large new church which seats 2,500 people began in 1990. It was dedicated in 1996. The new five-floor, twenty-seven bedroom priory was occupied in 1997, and blessed by Archbishop Okogie in 1998.

St Dominic's was initially headed by Michael Dempsey, who was both superior and pastor. He held these positions until he moved to Gusau as vicar provincial. He was followed by Giles Klapperich on 28 September 1965, Ambrose Windbacher on 14 September 1972, Colum Daley on 14 May 1977 and Richard Farmer on 14 May 1981. St Dominic's community became a priory in December 1983, with Richard Farmer as its first prior. He was followed on 24 January 1987 by Tom McDermott (who succeeded him as pastor on 21 February 1990), Martin Aitsebaomo on 27 March 1990, Peter Otilio on 24 May 1993, and Paul Oye in May 1996. Paul Oye resigned in July 1997 to succeed McDermott as pastor, and on 6 August Biodun Ademoye became prior.

St Dominic's church, the main apostolate of St Dominic's priory is one of the largest and most popular parishes in Nigeria, with an estimated membership of 40,000. Six Masses are celebrated every Sunday with approximately 25,000 people attending. There are also several outstations. The parish continues to grow and is certainly the best-known Dominican apostolate in Nigeria. The reason for this is good preaching, good service and good organisation. On Saturdays from six to ten priests simultaneously hear confessions for people who come from all over the city.

The priory has other apostolates as well: St Dominic's Bookstore, St Dominic's Clinic, and the St Jude apostolate, which are

all based at St Dominic's. Francis Isichei is a lecturer at the University of Lagos. Stephen Lucas has started administering several clinics, schools and other social services. At present fifteen brothers, including the provincial, reside in the priory. The provincial office is also located there. There is room for more brothers and more apostolates.

THE DIOCESE OF SOKOTO

In 1953 the Dominicans were given charge of the apostolic prefecture of Sokoto, carved out of the archdiocese of Kaduna. In this heavily Muslim area the Society of African Missions had already opened a station in Gusau, that served as the headquarters for the new prefecture, headed by Thaddeus Edward Lawton. A new church was built in 1955. Thomas Martin supervised the building of the new house which was ready in September 1956 for temporary occupancy by the newly-arrived Dominican sisters. Their own house, with a dispensary and maternity hospital, was completed the next year.

When Sokoto was made a diocese in 1963, Bishop Lawton decided to have his cathedral in Sokoto, the capital of the province of the same name. Dominicans had opened a house there in 1957. Yelwa, with a hospital run by the Dominican sisters, was opened in 1958. Funtua was opened in 1960, and Malumfashi, with the sisters' dispensary, in 1962. The Katsina church was opened in 1958, but no priest lived there until Colum Daley moved to Sokoto with Tom Martin in 1964.

While attending the ordination of the first priest for the prefecture, Anthony Okonkwo, in Gusau on 7 July 1963, Mgr Lawton suffered a serious heart attack followed by a clot in his leg. He went to the United States on 11 September to rest (if that was possible for him), returning on 29 February 1964. On 6 June, the prefecture was made a diocese and Mgr Lawton appointed bishop. He was ordained in Sokoto on 15 August. As bishop he took part in the remaining sessions of the Second Vatican Council, and because of his collegiate responsibilities was travelling more than ever before to preach and take part in meetings within and without Nigeria. On one such trip, leaving Sokoto for Kaduna on 19 December 1966, he died from an-

other heart attack in the car about twenty miles out, having completed a rosary "for a safe journey".

Michael Dempsey was ordained bishop of Sokoto on 15 August 1967 at St Pius church, Chicago. He returned to Nigeria on 27 September. From the time of his first coming to Nigeria, Dempsey was on a constant preaching circuit and was asked more frequently than anyone in the country to preach on important occasions. He used to round off his brilliant apostolate by cleaning toilet bowls for the brethren. After years of petitioning to be relieved of his diocese, he was released from this post in 1985, and returned to the United States. He died in Denver on 19 March 1996.

Work in the Sokoto diocese was primarily with southern Catholics resident in the area. Bit by bit, especially with the absence of southerners during the civil war (1966-70), contact was made with indigenous people, especially in Malumfashi and Yelwa, and a significant community of indigenous Catholics was established.

Now all the stations in Sokoto diocese have been handed back to the bishop, except Gusau, which has been permanently entrusted to the Order. In the beginning, Mgr Lawton was effectively the pastor of the station while Victor Nadeau was the religious superior for the house and all the Dominicans in the diocese. By 1961, Colum Daley was made local superior-pastor, a post which went to James McHatton on 5 August 1962, Richard Farmer on 1 November 1963, Bertrand Ebben on 1 August 1967, Justus Pokrzewinski on 1 October 1969, Callistus Itheme on 16 August 1979, Igba Vishigh in March 1983, and Colum Daley on 20 May 1989. The offices of pastor and superior were then separated with Colum Daley continuing as pastor and Matthew Uwaya becoming superior on 20 June 1992. Matthew Uwaya became acting pastor from March 1994 when Colum Daley was ill. He was appointed pastor on 1 February 1995, handing over to Peter Oillio in February 1997, when Matthew joined the community in East London, South Africa. In the meantime Thomas Macauley became superior in November 1995, handing over to Charles Ukwé in September 1997.

Gusau remains mainly a town parish catering for Catholics

coming from other states. It handles several outstations in other towns for the same category of people. The vast majority of the indigenous people of Gusau's Zamfara state are Muslim, but there are two small outstations of indigenous Catholics. The challenge is to develop these indigenous communities and, at the same time, reach out to Muslims in dialogue and cooperation. In this, the greatest challenge is to educate and inspire the immigrant Catholics to take their part in this outreach.

THE IBADAN SEMINARY

Dominicans first came to Ibadan in 1965, when Victor Nadeau took over as rector of SS. Peter and Paul Seminary. He was joined by John Connell, and in 1967 by Matt Walsh. Kenneth Harkins arrived in 1968. Nadeau resigned from the rectorship (and the Order) in 1969, Harkins left in 1970, and Connell in 1971. To this day, other Dominicans have continuously taught in the seminary, but they have resided in the Dominican community.

AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY

In the meantime, in September 1967, Richard Farmer became chaplain and lecturer in philosophy at the University of Ife, and started a Dominican presence there. Greg Moore was with him in 1967 and 1968, but for most of the time Farmer was alone. Richard Farmer left for Yaba in 1979. Gilbert Thesing then came with Iheanyi Enwerem in September 1980. Aniedi Okure was at the University of Ife from 1981 until he went to study at Boston University in 1986. When Thesing became vice-provincial in April 1989, Callistus IHEME came to Ife as pastor, with Dokun Oyeshola as superior. Tony Amoako-Attah arrived in 1993. He became pastor in 1995, when Callistus went to Agbor.

Although Dominicans teach in four different universities in the country, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife is the only university where the friars have a community and a chaplaincy. Oyeshola lectures in the department of international relations, while Amoako-Attah is chaplain. This is an ideal combination for reaching all sectors of the university, and the two have worked together to produce a great revival of Catholic life on the campus.

THE EXPANSION OF THE ORDER

At the time when the Dominicans first went to Nigeria, the prevailing idea of the authorities in Rome and on the scene was that missionaries should encourage vocations to the diocesan priesthood and not for their own society or order. Towards 1960, this way of thinking changed, and orders were encouraged to take root in newly Christian areas, because of their international character and in recognition of their particular charism in the life of the church.

The Dominicans in Nigeria always encouraged vocations to the diocesan priesthood and to the various sisterhoods. But only in 1961 did they begin to lay serious plans for vocations to their own order. At a meeting in March 1961, it was decided to send young boys who were interested in the Order to the minor seminary. That year, about seven were sent to Barakin Ladi near Jos, and in the following years others were sent there and to the minor seminary in Ibadan. Meanwhile, Dominican thinking turned against minor seminaries. They now decided to send the boys to Aquinas Secondary School, which was expected to open in Gusau in 1965—but which finally did not. By 1966, it was decided not even to send boys to secondary school, but to recruit those who had already finished and obtained a General Certificate of Education with passes in a certain number of subjects. The investment in sending boys to minor seminaries was not in vain, since three Dominicans emerged from the programme.

In the meantime, candidates who already had the educational prerequisites for the clerical novitiate were presenting themselves. Everyone from Lagos to Gusau and from Chicago to Rome was scratching his head, trying to decide what to do. Eventually, England was thought to be the place least alien for Nigerians, and the first candidate, Ebere Uzosike, was sent to the novitiate in Gloucestershire in September 1961. A few months in an English priory were too much for the poor fellow so that the first attempt became the first failure. It was then agreed to try the mother province in the United States, and the next candidate, Alexander Okanlawon, was sent to Winona in September 1962. He completed the novitiate and made simple profession, but after two years in River Forest he was standing in

line for a ticket to Lagos. Another candidate, Youssef El-Naggar, an Egyptian who met Dominicans in Lebanon and was interested in working as a Dominican in Nigeria, started the novitiate in Winona on 15 August 1963, but he also left in his third year in River Forest. There had to be a novitiate and a programme of studies in Nigeria at all costs.

Meanwhile, the friars thought that they could go ahead with a novitiate for cooperator brothers, who are not required to undergo such an elaborate course of studies. On 13 June 1963, Hilary Carpenter, then secretary for missions of the Order, relayed to the provincial permission to open a novitiate for cooperator brothers in Yaba. Three candidates had long awaited precisely that word, and on 6 October 1963 they were received as novices, with Greg Moore as novice master until June 1964, when Ambrose Windbacher took over. The upstairs portion of the old house was the novitiate section. On 7 October 1964, the three made their simple profession, and of the three one, Chukwunonye Osunwoke, persevered to his solemn vows.

Other postulants came and, on 24 May 1965, two were accepted into the novitiate. Of these Clement Tyulen was the only one professed. He is now part of the Gusau community. From late 1964 to 1966 nine other postulants came and left. None were taken during the months of unrest in 1966, but towards the end of 1967 and in 1968, six postulants came. Only one of these entered the novitiate, but by that time formation was in Ibadan.

THE IBADAN COMMUNITY

Ibadan was not the first choice for a novitiate. In October 1964, when a common novitiate for clerical and cooperator brothers was not yet allowed, opinions were sought about the site of the clerical novitiate. Mgr Lawton favoured Zaria, Dempsey Lagos, and Moore and Nadeau the east, where Bishop Whelan had invited the friars. At a meeting in January 1966, it was decided to start the clerical novitiate in Gusau, with Justus Pokrzewinski as novice master. The novitiate for cooperator brothers would be kept in Yaba, and the house of studies would be in Ibadan, where some friars were already teaching in the seminary. Cement blocks were stacked to begin the building of the Gusau

novitiate quarters, but the prewar riots of 29 May eliminated Gusau as a possible site.

At the beginning of July 1966, Dempsey talked with Bishop Finn, the bishop of Ibadan, who invited the Dominicans to start their novitiate in his diocese and offered them land near the University of Ibadan. Greg Moore, who was working as mission director in Chicago, was asked to return to Nigeria and found the house in Ibadan. Arriving in Yaba on 3 March 1967, he explored Ibadan and, by the end of July, had rented a house and moved into it on 30 Kudeti Avenue, with Matt Walsh, who was still teaching at the seminary, and a group of postulants who came shortly afterwards. After getting the green light from the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (29 December 1967) and for Religious (3 January 1968), the master general Aniceto Fernandez sent word, on 9 and 10 January 1968, that he had made the Dominican community of Ibadan a formal house with a common novitiate for clerical and cooperator brothers. Greg Moore was the novice master.

On 2 February 1968, three clerical postulants were accepted into the novitiate. Two of these made profession and were later ordained. Their names are John Nwanze and Callistus Iheme.

At the beginning of April 1968, Daley came to help the community, but by then Moore was finding the job too demanding and asked to be relieved. Walsh was appointed superior and acting novice master on 20 May 1968. (He became novice master officially on 15 November when the master general confirmed the appointment.) In September 1968 Ed Riley joined the Dominican community. He lectured at the seminary for a long time. In February 1969, the community moved to another rented house in Kongi, near SS. Peter and Paul Seminary where the student brothers began taking most of their classes.

On 15 August 1969, a new group began their novitiate, with cooperator and clerical candidates combined for the first time. Of this class only Jude Mbukanma made profession. Since these student brothers needed separate attention from the novices, Riley was appointed master of students and director of studies.

On 7 March 1970, ground was broken for a permanent

Dominican house on land given by Bishop Finn near the University of Ibadan. On 9 November 1970, the community moved into the guest quarters. There on 7 December 1970 another class of novices was received. Three of them made profession: Ayo Atoyebi, Chukwubikem Okpechi, and Nzamujo Ugwegbulam. Nzamujo later transfiliated to the Lyon province, took his solemn vows in Dahomey (Benin), and was ordained in December 1975. Early in 1971 the community moved into the completed novitiate section, and occupied the lower student section on 26 August 1971, when the third vicariate chapter began. The students' upper section was ready by September 1973.

On 19 November 1971, a class of eight began their novitiate. Another candidate joined in November, and a tenth in December. Five of these made profession, but one of them for one year only. He left after the year. The remaining four, Daniel Chiezey, Iheanyi Enwerem, Chris Angelo Otuike and Igba Vishigh, made their solemn profession on 13 February 1976.

On 3 September 1972, five candidates were accepted into the novitiate, all of whom made their simple profession. The only one who continued to solemn profession was Lawrence Dokun Oyeshola. In 1973 there were three novices, none of whom made profession. On 1 September 1974 four novices were accepted, all of whom made profession. They are Lawrence Agu, Anthony Amoako-Attah, Chris Egbulem, and Peter Aniedi Okure.

More men were needed to help meet the various needs of this expanding community. When, in January 1971, Gilbert Thesing began his studies for the priesthood, he also helped with maintenance and economic management. Joe Kenny was assigned to Ibadan in September 1971 and resided in the house part of each year, teaching in the seminary. Greg Moore arrived in January 1972 and was appointed master of students in March to relieve Ed Riley. In September 1972, Kelly came to be master of students, and Moore became superior of the house, relieving Walsh, while Tom Martin was an economic manager from September 1972 to September 1974. On 29 January 1974, Bede Jagoe became the first prior of the newly made priory, and

Moore left for Malumfashi. Columba McGarry was economic manager from October 1974 to May 1975. After a stay in the north, he came back to this job in 1979.

During this time, the community benefited from numerous visiting lecturers and preachers, notably Jordan Aumann, Frank MacNutt and his team, Jacques Jomier (from Cairo) and Tom O'Meara, the pioneers of a long series of distinguished visiting lecturers or preachers.

The high point of the Dominican presence in Nigeria came with two events of March 1975. On the 13th, Vincent de Couesnongle, master of the Dominican Order, dedicated the house and chapel of the Ibadan community, and on the 31st Bishop Dempsey ordained to the priesthood Gilbert Thesing, John Nwanze and Callistus Iheme, the first friars to be ordained in Nigeria.

Those who were elected as prior after Bede Jagoe were Gilbert Thesing on 9 February 1977, Justus Pokrzewinski on 19 February 1980, who served two terms and Peter Otilio in May 1986, who also served two terms. Chukwubikem Okpechi came on 7 May 1992, and Gilbert Thesing for a second time on 14 May 1995.

Novice masters following Matt Walsh were James Brendan Kelly in May 1975, Ed Riley in 1977, Chukwubikem Okpechi in May 1979, Ay-Maria Atoyebi in 1983, Lawrence Agu in 1992 – when Ay-Maria was made bishop of Ilorin – and Justus Pokrzewinski in 1997.

Student masters following J.B. Kelly were Gilbert Thesing in 1975, Robert Antoninus Kilbridge in 1977, Chukwubikem Okpechi in 1983, Tony Amoako-Attah in 1989, Clement Dioka in 1993 and Ignatius Madumere in 1997.

From the beginning in Nigeria, those received into the novitiate number 252, twenty-eight of whom were sent by other entities of the IAOP. The solemnly-professed students for Nigeria until 1997 number seventy-seven. The province of Nigeria currently has forty-four priests.³

The original moderator of studies was Ed Riley. His job was to oversee the studies of the Dominican students, all of whom

³ Statistics of 1997.

did their courses at SS. Peter & Paul Seminary. In 1975 Richard Farmer succeeded him, although he still resided in Ife. When the Inter-African assembly, at the behest of the master of the Order, Vincent de Couesnongle, decided to attempt running a school of theology at Ibadan in 1976, Joseph Kenny was made moderator of studies and co-ordinator of the theology project. After the failure of this project, and with Kenny joining the University of Ibadan in 1979, Ed Riley came back as moderator of studies. In 1983, Jude Mbukanma took over. With the establishment of the vice-province in 1985, he also had the new job of regent of studies.

In 1989 Joseph Kenny came back as moderator of studies, while he was also regent. The 1993 chapter appointed Iheanyi Enwerem to these positions, adding the new post of president of the Dominican Institute. Its affiliation to the University of Ibadan, long delayed because of strikes, was finally approved in August of that year. When Tony Akinwale returned to Ibadan from Boston in October 1996, he was made moderator of studies. The provincial chapter of 1997 divided the three academic responsibilities among three brothers: Joseph Kenny as regent, Tony Akinwale as moderator of studies, and Iheanyi Enwerem as president of the Dominican Institute.

THE DOMINICAN INSTITUTE

The master of the Order, Timothy Radcliffe, described the establishment of the Dominican province of Nigeria and of the Dominican Institute as the two most significant events of Dominican history in Africa in recent times. The purpose of the Dominican Institute is not merely to provide basic academic formation for the brothers, but also to serve as an intellectual focus for the province as well as a centre of influence on the country as a whole and on the wider world. This is already partly realised in the monthly intellectual life lectures, which have become an attraction for the staff of the University of Ibadan and other academic institutions in Ibadan. In this way the aim of the first Dominicans in coming to Nigeria to set up a Thomistic Institute, is being realised.

The establishment of the Dominican Institute was a timely answer to the prayers not only of Dominicans, but also of other

orders and societies such as the Redemptorists, the Missionaries of Africa, the Capuchins and the Benedictines who expressed their intention to send students to the Institute. Since the Dominican Institute is a school and not a seminary, admission has also been granted to some female religious.

The affiliation of the Dominican Institute to the University of Ibadan covers a philosophy and philosophy/religious studies combined Honours. A theology programme was introduced in October 1996, and affiliation of this programme with Duquesne University was granted in 1997. It will give the students a Master's degree at the end of their course.

Except for one Missionary of Africa, the full-time staff of the Dominican Institute are all Dominicans of the province of Nigeria. Part-time staff come from Dominicans who are in other work and from lecturers at the University of Ibadan and SS. Peter & Paul Seminary, where many Dominicans also teach courses.

THE DOMINICAN ORDER IN GHANA

From the beginning in 1951, parish ministry has been the dominant occupation of most of the brothers. In addition to the early stations mentioned above, a parish was opened by Tony Kilbridge in the diocese of Kumasi, Ghana, in May 1971. It was taken as a stand-by until he and others could get visas for Nigeria. This parish was given back to the bishop in October 1975, when Tony Kilbridge came to Nigeria. In June 1992, the Dominicans took over the parish of St Martin de Porres in Atonsu-Agogo, Kumasi, with Emmanuel Ogu and Stephen Owusu-Achaw as the first priests. The community became a formal house in September 1993.

Ghana has given the Nigerian province a good number of vocations and it is a land of great promise. Apart from maintaining a presence in Kumasi, plans are under way for a new foundation in Accra.

PARISH MINISTRY

The parish of St Patrick, with several outstations, was taken over at Agbor-Obi in the diocese of Issele-Uku, with Chukwubikem

Okpechi as superior-pastor on 2 February 1985. He was assisted by Iheanyi Enwerem and Colum Daley. Daley made the dilapidated house livable. John Nwanze became the pastor in May 1992. Charles Ukwe became superior in September 1993, when the community was made a formal house.

The parish of St Jude, Mafoluku, Lagos, within walking distance of Murtala Muhammad International Airport, was taken over in October 1989, with Justus Pokrzewinski as pastor-superior, assisted by Nicodemus Ugwu, and the vice-provincial, Gilbert Thesing, in residence. The community was made a formal house on 5 February 1990. It has the outstation of St Peter Claver in Ajao Estate, as well as the airport chapel which is yet to be completed.

All Saints, a huge parish with nine outstations, in Oyigbo, in the diocese of Aba, was taken in 1994, with Charles Ukwe the first pastor. The community became a formal house in 1997.

In May 1992, Ay-Maria Atoyebi was ordained bishop of Ilorin. This large diocese, the Borgu territory of which was carved out in 1996 to become the new prefecture of Kontagora, has a small percentage of Catholics and a poor economic base. Ilorin became an emirate of the Sokoto caliphate in 1830 and Muslims dominate the city. Relations between the two faith communities, however, are cordial. Jude Mbukanma has been the only other Dominican resident in Ilorin since 1996.

From the start, in 1951, Dominican parishes have been both innovative and successful. This is because of the quality of preaching, the organisational efficiency, regularity of service, liturgical awareness, insistence on voluntary contributions rather than levies, and closeness to the people.

Today, the friars only run parishes in cities. In the past, primary evangelisation was their main focus in the entire Sokoto diocese. This challenging work, carried out especially by Carson Champlin, Joseph Kenny, Bruno Kowalkowski and Lawrence Agu, involved the translation of the liturgy and the Bible, the developing of indigenous liturgical music, the building of churches, the teaching of catechists, the construction of wells and the pursuit of other developmental projects, the teaching of hygiene, literacy (mostly done by the sisters) and

many other jobs which drew on all the friars' talents.

THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

Nearly all the senior brothers are called from time to time to give retreats to priests or religious and to parishes. Some, like Jude Mbukanma and Augustine Momoh, conduct large-scale revivals or charismatic rallies.

The charismatic movement came to Nigeria through the Dominicans. Bert Ebben started a prayer group in Ibadan in the early 1970s which was given a boost by a visit from Frank McNutt and his team in 1974. Since then, this movement has spread throughout Nigeria.

RELATIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIMS

Msgr Lawton became concerned about what might be an appropriate approach to the large numbers of Muslims in the Sokoto diocese. A visit by the apostolic delegate, Sergio Pignedoli in 1961 encouraged him to plan something concrete. Finding no Catholic missionary informed about the Islamic situation in Nigeria, Pignedoli asked the Dominicans if they could provide men for this work. Lawton thereupon turned to the Cairo Dominicans for help and advice. Georges Anawati could not get an exit visa, but in 1963 Jacques Jomier made a survey visit, the first of many visits, and recommended that two men be trained who could work as a team.

Accordingly, in January 1964 Lawton spoke to the Dominican students in Dubuque about this and other needs. Joseph Kenny, who had been recently ordained and was completing his studies, was ready for an assignment. He went to Nigeria in November 1964, learned Hausa, gained some practical experience and, in 1966, went to study at the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Muslim Studies (PISAI) in Rome. After a year in Rome, he spent a full year learning Arabic in Tunisia, and completed a doctorate in Arabic and Islamic studies in Edinburgh in 1970. In the meantime, Jim Kelly had done a Master's degree in African studies at the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies with emphasis on Islamic law.

Demands for pastoral work and the xenophobia of the population allowed only limited practical contacts with Muslims in Sokoto, but Kenny continued his research and writing in this area, especially after he joined the University of Ibadan in 1979. Later, Igba Vishigh studied Arabic and Islam in Rome and started a doctoral programme at the University of Jos, where he is currently lecturing. In 1996, Segun Taiwo began Arabic in Rome, while, in the same year, Frédéric Mvumbi, a Dominican student from the Congo completed an Masters in Islam under the supervision of Joseph Kenny at the University of Ibadan. He remains there as a lecturer, while working on his doctorate.

DOMINICANS AND THE ARTS

Chukwunonye Osunwoke took up residence in Ibadan in 1969 and, being a professional tailor, began making liturgical vestments and fashion clothes, which were very much in demand. The operation expanded as he used it to train apprentices. When he went for studies in the United States in 1977, the Ibadan community had difficulty attending to the management of the arts workshop, which was frequently targeted by thieves. It was therefore closed. But it later reopened in Mafoluku, under the management of Paul Kete. Under the name of Dominican Arts, it has continued to prosper.

Holy Innocents Day, by unbroken tradition, is a day during which the novices perform drama. These productions, especially when the novices had degrees in drama, were spectacular. Several lecturers at the University of Ibadan assisted with these plays, some of which were performed at the university. Apart from the students, Justus Pokrzewinski and Joseph Kenny played major roles in various films.

In music, the students have been active in composing songs for the liturgy. Over the years they have also been involved in performances of various classical chorales and solo works in the chapel. Some of the brothers have performed in concerts at the University of Ibadan. On these occasions both there and at Lagos Joseph Kenny has performed on the piano.

Several of the vestments and plaques at Ibadan are the work of Kenneth Nkadi. The Ibadan church and cloister, designed by

Demas Nwoko, are a cultural monument that constantly attracts visitors from all over Nigeria and abroad.

DOMINICAN PUBLICATIONS

From the early days in Yaba, Stephen Lucas had managed a bookstore and printed many popular titles on the Catholic faith. As the need to publish grew, Tom McDermott was put in charge of Dominican Publications in 1989. In 1994, because of the church building at Yaba, he asked to be relieved of this job, and Joseph Kenny was made director. In recent years, in addition to popular titles, some academic books have been published, the budget permitting.

Dominican Publications also makes audio cassettes. The production of these has mainly been handled by Ambrose Windbacher.

DOMINICAN FARM

When Chukwunonye Osunwoke returned to Ibadan in 1986, he began the Dominican farm, with pigs, goats, sheep, chicken and rabbits, in addition to crops. As part of this project, the land north of Moniya was obtained for fish ponds and the growing of crops. After the farm had been established, Osunwoke moved to Yaba in 1996. A lay person has continued to manage the farm.

Apiculture was introduced by Joseph Kenny in 1993. The number of bee hives has steadily increased. As the pre-novitiate period coincides with the honey harvest, the pre-novices have helped with the extraction and bottling of the honey, which brings the community more income than Kenny's professorial salary at the University of Ibadan.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Dominican sisters in the Sokoto diocese played an important role with their hospitals, clinics and rural medical outreach. They are still involved in social development projects at Zuru and Agbor. Bruno Kowalkowski contributed significantly to a programme to help the people around Malumfashi build sanitary wells.

In Yaba, we can mention the work of Stephen Lucas in providing clinics and other social services for the people. Chukwunonye Osonwoke is using his training in psychology and clinical pastoral education to minister to mentally disturbed people.

In Ibadan Edward Riley is running a service to help the destitute and mentally disturbed, helping people, who were abandoned by all, to be able to live normal lives.

FOREIGN MISSIONS AND INTER-AFRICAN COOPERATION

After completing his doctorate in Washington DC, Chris Egbulem remained in the United States teaching but, more importantly, assisting in programmes for Afro-Americans throughout the country. In 1994, a formal contract was signed between the Nigerian province and the diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to supply three priests. These priests, however, do not live in a community. In 1995, an agreement was concluded with the diocese of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to take a parish in East London. Chukwubikem Okpechi led the foundation. Then, in 1995, John Nwanze began working for the diocese of Seattle.

Inter-African cooperation is related to the heading of foreign missions. Numerous students from the province of Nigeria have studied theology in Kinshasa, while Ibadan has welcomed students from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi and elsewhere. In the same context, Joseph Kenny has every second year been teaching at the *Facultés catholiques* in Kinshasa, while residing in the Limete priory.

UNREST AND CIVIL WAR IN NIGERIA

The coming of independence in 1960 meant that the Dominicans, all still Americans, had to work in a land governed by Nigerians. Until that time, nearly all the educational and medical work in the country had been in the hands of the Christian missions. Yet, the Nigerians who now controlled the Federation were not products of the Christian schools or members of the Christian faith. They were Muslims from the far north. The British had allowed them to take control of the

northern region, which played a dominant role in the Federation. The sardauna of Sokoto and the prime minister of the northern region promptly launched a conversion drive (*jihad*) with the aim of "spreading the Qur'ân all the way until the sea." A tribal and religious struggle had begun.

The first violence came with the coup in 1966, followed by pogroms against Igbos and attacks on churches in the north. The Biafra then seceded and a civil war erupted. Federal victory was marked by General Gowon's policy of reconciling the Igbos, but also by a take-over of church schools and hospitals. It was announced—but the project was not carried out—that a mosque would be constructed in every village in the country. Visas for would-be foreign missionaries were systematically denied or delayed.

The church had long promoted indigenous vocations and, from the early 1960s, the implantation of religious orders in Nigeria. The Dominican vocation programme was well under way when the civil war ended in 1970. But the situation was difficult, with no new missionaries and an increasing workload at Yaba and in the Sokoto diocese. Relief came with the first ordinations in 1975.

From the late 1970s until the early 1990s, there were several inter-religious riots in the north. At first they were a repetition of the 1966 scene when Christians went like lambs to the slaughter. But soon Christians learned to defend themselves and later riots became a warning for Muslim thugs to be more careful. But a more significant factor in the dying down of inter-religious riots was disillusionment with the government.

Hopes rose or fell among opposing parties at the Murtala Muhammad coup in 1976, followed by the Dimka attempt and the Obasanjo succession the same year and the Second Republic under Shagari in 1978. The Buhari coup of 31 January 1985, the Babangida coup of 1986, the annulment of Abiola's 12 June 1992 election and the devious hand over to Shonekan in 1993 and to Abacha in 1994 left people tired of coups and more and more disillusioned with anything that government could offer. As the economy disintegrated and armed robbery increased, Christians and Muslims woke up to the fact that they were

suffering together at the hands of leaders who exploited religion in order to divide and rule and serve their own interests.

Dominicans took a keen interest in following all these developments and in making their own contribution to peace and the security of people. Iheanyi Enwerem's *A Dangerous Awakening* is an important study of the situation.

THE CHALLENGE OF PENTECOSTALISM

Another factor in the evolution of Nigeria is the phenomenon of pentecostal movements and churches. Pentecostalism became prominent as the country began to disintegrate politically, economically and socially from around 1980. The failure of all institutions reinforced the natural religiosity of Nigerians, but pentecostalism capitalised on the situation by its unabashed advertisement of miracles and its preaching of a "gospel of prosperity". This was reinforced by American tele-evangelism methods, hype music and dress, with a theology that condemned both the "pagan" African tradition and Catholic sacraments or veneration of Mary. Pentecostalism seduced youth and adults from traditional Protestant churches, "white garment" Africanist churches and also the Catholic church.

It would be easy simply to shift gear and compete with Pentecostals on their own terms, and this is what many Catholic healers and prophets have successfully done. But in the long run this could be merely a weaning of Catholics from their own tradition. The challenge is to sell the full sacramental mystery of the church in an attractive liturgy, while at the same time being attentive to the human needs of people. Dominicans have been responding successfully to this challenge through their liturgies, preaching and popular publications, particularly the student publication *Decision*, of which 5,000 copies are sold quarterly. Jude Mbukanma's, *Is it in the Bible?* is another popular seller that addresses Pentecostal questions.

7

West Africa

GILLES SOGLO

Dakar in Senegal, Abidjan in the Ivory Coast and Cotonou in Benin are the points of departure for the Dominican presence in francophone West Africa. Their foundation came from Lyon. To write the history of the regional vicariate is to follow, year by year, the development of these three houses. It is also a matter of starting at the source in order to discover how the sons of Saint Dominic followed the steps of their forebears of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and lived and proclaimed the word of grace that was their *raison d'être*. We shall follow their successive foundations: Dakar in 1954, Abidjan in 1960 and Cotonou in 1970. This diachronic presentation will be completed by synchronic sections which will demonstrate the dynamics of the Order's presence in francophone West Africa.

THE DAKAR FOUNDATION

Among the friars of the then Lyon province who introduced the Order to the region, Marie-Bernard Nielly figures as a pioneer. He was the first to arrive in Dakar in 1954. Under him, the Order took root and the friars devoted themselves to the pastoral duties of the local church. Lyon was accustomed to faraway missions in Indochina. However, sending Marie-Bernard Nielly to Dakar in 1954 was also a result of Maurice Corvez, the provincial, having heard Fr Petit preaching in France. Petit had made him aware of the apostolic needs of sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar, then the capital of French West Africa, was ideally placed to become the bridgehead for the Order's future implantation.¹

Marcel Lefebvre, then archbishop of Dakar and apostolic delegate for Africa, was the special interlocutor of the Dominicans. In a letter of 8 May 1954, Corvez informed him of the availability of friars from his province. The archbishop's reply

1. 20 December 1954, p.1 Archives of the Dakar Dominican community.