



DIOCESE OF MAMFE

A LETTER ANNOUNCING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMING OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT TO FONTEM AND THE EXISTENCE OF OUR LADY SEAT OF WISDOM COLLEGE, FONTEM, COME 2016

To

Their Royal Majesties the Fons of Fontem, Fonjumentaw, Lewoh, Essoh-Attah, Bamumbu, Ndungatet, Nwangong, M'mock Mbie, M'mock Ngie, Nkong, Bangang, Besali, Bechati, Folepi, Banti, Igumbu,

The entire Population of Nweh-Mundani,

Members of the Focolare Movement in Fontem and abroad,

The Principal, Staff and Students of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College,

All Past Principals and Staff of Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College,

The Matron and Staff of Mary Health of Africa Hospital, Fontem,

The President General of SWESA and all SWESANS,

All Past Students of OLSWC,

The President and Members of the PTA,

All the Clergy, Religious Men and Women,

All Christ's Faithful and People of Goodwill,

Diocese of Mamfe and Beyond;

Dear Beloved in Christ,

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good,

His love endures forever.

Let the sons of Israel say,

His love endures forever



I write to announce to you news of great tidings! In 2016, the Focolare Movement will be fifty years old in Fontem and so too the beloved Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College Fontem will be fifty since its creation. Alleluia.

Within these last fifty years, the charism of unity has existed in the Bangwa land and the people have experienced the intervention of God in their history. The coming of the Focolare Movement to Fontem fifty years ago, can only be compared the visit of Yahweh to save the Israelites from the slavery and death they were experiencing in Egypt and their passage to the land of promise. Looking at the work of Mary in Fontem all these years, the Bangwa people can simply chant the hymn of Zachariah who sang after the birth of John the Baptist, that *"the loving kindness of our God, has visited us like the dawn from on high. He will give light to those in darkness, those who dwell in the shadow of death and guide our way into the way of peace"* (Lk.1:78-79).

Indeed, through the Focolare Movement, God has visited the Bangwa people and we can see this in their work through the spirituality of unity in the Hospital, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College, the Carpentry Workshop, Building and electricity workshops, New Evangelisation, New Families and New Generation of the Youth at all levels. They have lived the pact of mutual love with the Bangwa people and taught them the spirituality of unity and universal brotherhood. God so good we are celebrating these events within the year of Mercy declared by our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

In the Exultet on Easter night, the priest sings thus: *"What would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?"* The Bangwa people can borrow these words undiluted and say *"What would life have been to the Bangwa people, had the Focolare Movement not come to Fontem to help us"*. They have reduced the infant mortality within these years from close to 90% to almost zero; they have tirelessly worked hard to eliminate the deadly Tsetse Fly that made Fontem look like the valley of death; thousands of Lebialem people would not have had a good education without them; good health facilities have been at our door steps all these years and even many of the Lebialem children have learnt to know and love God.

"What would life have been to the Bangwa people, had the Focolare Movement not come to Fontem to help us". The dis-enclavement of many villages in Lebialem by bulldozing roads would not have taken place without the Focolare



Movement, and many pagan practices would have still been going on if these people had not brought the Good News of Christ to serve as the light to our people.

When Chiara Lubich stood at the top of the hill and predicted a rising city in Fontem, it was God speaking through her and today that dream has come true through the sweat, toil and sacrifices of many Focolarini and Focolarine, who have left home, Father, mother, brothers and sisters, children for the sake of our people. We pay special tribute to Ita, Miss Jane Dube, Jane Frances, Ma Pia and all the members of the Movement who have lost their lives in Fontem and have been planted in our soil as fertilizers to make the gospel continue to spread. Through them, the Bangwa people understand truly what Christ means when he says *"Greater love has no man, than to lay down his life for his friends"* (Jn.15:13).

Now is the time to celebrate the love of God for all the Lebiallem people. I call on all the Fons, the population in general and the Catholics in particular to all get up and join together to celebrate this great sign of God among his people. Let the Fons rally all their people and come out to thank God for visiting us through the Focolare Movement. Let us not wait for the Focolare Movement to call us, let us join together to go and thank them for sacrificing their lives that we may live. We shall celebrate for them and with them and not them to celebrate for us.

In the same vein, the Our Lady Seat of Wisdom college will also be celebrating under the theme *"Changing lives and building futures"* and I call on the Principal, staff and students, Parent Teachers Association, and all past staff and students to put their hands together in gratitude to God for all he has done for his people through this great institution.

In this regard, I have the following declarations to make concerning this great celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Focolare Movement and OLSW College;

1. That I hereby declare the 8th of December, 2015 to the 17th of December, 2016 as a Jubilee Year for the Focolare Movement in Fontem. I am therefore circulating a Jubilee Prayer that will be recited daily by all the stake holders stated above till the grand celebration of the anniversary;
2. That the grand celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Focolare Movement shall take place in the Mariapolis Centre in Fontem, from Wednesday 14th December 2016 to Friday 16th of December, 2016, with a full day dedicated to



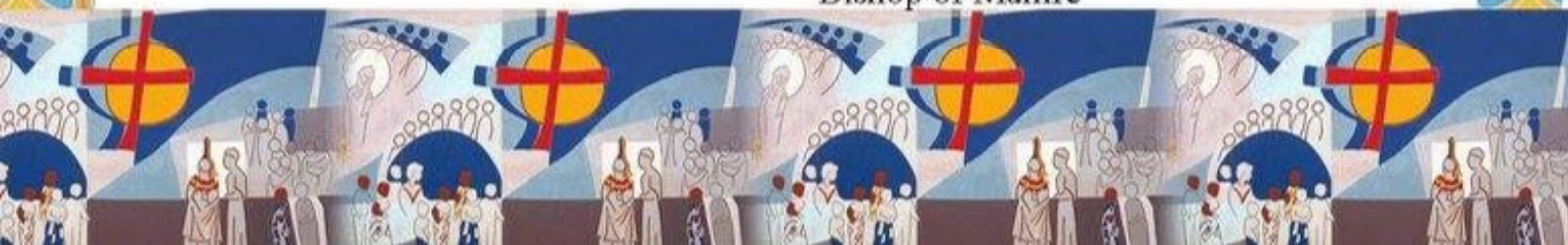
an International Conference on Interreligious Dialogue and its experience among the Bangwa people for the last 50 years, and another full day dedicated to testimonies about the work of the Movement in Fontem before the peak celebration.

3. That the celebration of the Jubilee of the college shall take place on Saturday the 17th of December, 2016 at the college campus.
4. That during the Jubilee Year, there should be retreats, spiritual and social activities by the Focolare Movement and by the SWESANS at branch, class and other levels of the past Students and the college, to prepare for this Jubilee;
5. That Committees shall be created to prepare for this jubilee comprising of members from the Diocese of Mamfe, The Focolare Movement, Past Students and Members of the PTA and the Traditional authorities of Lebialem. Mr. John Fongang shall chair the Steering Committee, while Fr. Frantisek Slavicek and Miss Winifred Nwafor will co-chair the sub Committee for the Interreligious Dialogue and Testimonies, and Mr. Gregory Alem will chair the subcommittee for the college Jubilee. Other committees shall be created and people appointed in due time. I call on all who will be appointed to kindly and generously offer their time, intelligence and resources to ensure a successful 50th anniversary celebration;
6. That we shall be circulating some letters of appeal to various individuals and Bodies towards the realization of jubilee projects of the college;
7. That all should be done to ensure accountability and transparency for the monies that will be collected;
8. That all the present staff and students, all the past staff and students (whether they belong to SWESA or not), all the past and present members of the PTA should each see this celebration as a personal occasion for reconciliation with God and their neighbor and to also check their Christian lives.

May Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, Health of Africa and Patroness of Cameroon, accompany us with her maternal protection and intercession towards a successful Jubilee celebration.

God bless you all

+Andrew NKEA,
Bishop of Mamfe





FOCOLARE MOVEMENT GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATION IN FONTEM PREPARATORY PRAYER

Eternal Father, rich in mercy and source of every good, we thank you for the great gift of the charism of unity, which fifty years ago you freely gave to Fontem in Cameroon, from where it has spread to all of Africa. In this Golden Jubilee celebration, we ask you to increase our faith in you. Never allow us to grow tired of placing our hope in you. With gratitude and love, we remember in a special way Chiara, Bishop Jules Peeters and Fon Defang who were the pioneers of this divine adventure. Reward them with eternal happiness in your heavenly kingdom.

Lord Jesus, living among us, you enabled us to found the Christian community in the spirit of love and unity. On the cross you redeemed us with your abandonment; make us always ready to start again with humility in love towards you in every neighbor. You who are present in our midst,



help us to understand how to live and love you in the challenges and burdens of life, so that everything may contribute to the growth of universal brotherhood. May we be your witnesses inspired by those who have gone before us in this dream in Fontem: focolarini, volunteers, priests, men and women religious, families, young people.

Holy Spirit, you moved the Bangwa people first and then many others to welcome the spirit of love and unity. Enkindle your fire of charity in all our communities that Jesus may live in their midst and everyone may become a zealous apostle of his Testament "that all may be one".

Mary our Mother, Queen of all Saints and Patroness of Cameroon, accompany us with your maternal love during this year of preparation for our jubilee and in our holy journey.

AMEN.

+Andrew NKEA
Bishop of Mamfe