

THE AFRICA REPORT

AN ENDURING MISSION – TWO POPES NAMED LEO

Father Barthelemy Bazemo, M.Afr.
Provincial of the Americas and President of the Missionaries of Africa, Inc.



Pope Leo XIV at Saint Peter's Basilica on Thursday, May 8, 2025.

There are moments in our journey when it is important to pause and reflect—not just on where we are, but on how far we've come and what continues to guide us forward. The election this year of Chicagoan Robert Prevost as Pope Leo XIV is one of those moments—a time to stop and give thanks for the journey so far.

More than 150 years ago, our founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, began shaping our missionary vocation with the support of Pope Pius IX, and later Pope Leo XIII. With the full backing of the Vatican, Cardinal Lavigerie helped establish a missionary society rooted in justice, cultural respect, and the Gospel. Pope Leo XIII's belief in the dignity of every person strengthened Lavigerie's stand against slavery and affirmed the Church's call to mission and justice.

Today, we continue to walk the path those early missionaries began—and we do so under the guidance of Pope Leo XIV, himself an experienced missionary. His name is no coincidence. Like Pope Leo XIII, Pope Leo XIV brings a deep commitment to both the dignity of every person and the work of evangelization, shaped by his own missionary experience in Latin America. He has walked dusty roads, broken bread with those on the margins, and ministered where the Church is still growing. His voice rings with urgency when he reminds us that mission is not optional—it is essential. There are still people waiting to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, and so we must listen to the mandate given to the apostles: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

that call clearly. We give thanks for the support we receive from partners like you—support that is empowering the remarkable growth of the Church in Africa. Your generosity is helping to build schools, train future priests, and bring the Gospel to remote communities. In many African nations, parishes are full, vocations are rising, and communities are sending missionaries of their own—to other parts of Africa, to Europe, the United States, and beyond. The Church in Africa is no longer just a mission territory. It is a missionary Church.

As Missionaries of Africa, we hear

So yes, there is much to be grateful for. For the vision that inspired our founding. For two Popes named Leo who, in their own time and way, lit fires of missionary zeal. And for a Church in Africa that is alive, growing, and helping to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Let us keep going—faithful to the path, open to the Spirit, and united in mission. Pope Leo XIV reminds us that the world still longs for meaning, for mercy, and for truth. As missionaries, we carry not just a message but, with your support, bear witness to hope in every step we take.



Pope Leo XIII (March 2, 1810 – July 20, 1903)



CARDINAL LAVIGERIE AND THE FRENCH REPUBLIC



Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, founder of the Missionaries of Africa, was no stranger to controversy. A towering figure in both Church and society, he believed deeply in the power of faith to transform lives—especially in Africa. But in 1890, he turned his attention to France and made a bold move that would help reshape the Church’s political alignment.

At a formal banquet in Algiers with French naval officers and colonial officials, Cardinal Lavigerie delivered what became known as the “Algiers Toast.” This was no casual toast. It was a carefully crafted appeal—publicly urging France’s monarchists to accept the Republican constitution and embrace modern democracy. Long a monarchist himself, Lavigerie’s shift was striking. Yet he acted in coordination with Pope Leo XIII, who saw the Church’s future aligned not with royal dynasties but with the changing political realities of Europe.

The New York Times reported in 1891 that Lavigerie’s statement marked a clear turn in the Church’s relationship to the modern world: “Everything clearly indicates the decided drift of the Catholic Church toward modern democracy.” According to observers close to the Pope, Leo XIII had always believed that “it [was] of prime importance for the Church to free itself from identification with the old dynastic parties.”

The cost of this political realignment was steep. Relationships with traditionalists in France were already strained by Lavigerie’s outspoken anti-slavery campaigns; now, he lost their backing completely. These were the very supporters who had been crucial in the early development of the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Yet he held firm. His faith in African Christians—and their ability to evangelize their own continent—never wavered.

The Algiers Toast marked a pivotal moment—when a missionary cardinal publicly rallied the faithful to embrace the realities of Republican government, despite the personal and institutional cost.

NATIVE UGANDAN NAMED U.S. BISHOP

We are excited to announce that Father Simon Peter Engurait, a native of Uganda and friend of the Missionaries of Africa in Washington, has been appointed Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux by Pope Leo XIV.

Father Engurait, born in 1971, studied at St. Peter’s College in Tororo, Katigondo National Seminary, Makerere University, and Maastricht School of Management. He was ordained in May 2013 for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux after completing his formation at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans.

Since ordination, Father Engurait has served in various roles, including Pastor, Vicar General, and Diocesan Administrator. He will be the first native African diocesan bishop in the U.S., joining Bishop Jerome Feudjio of Saint Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Ordination and Installation will take place on Friday, September 5, 2025.



*Bishop-Elect Simon
Peter Engurait*

SUPERIOR GENERAL APPOINTED TO VATICAN DICASTERY



*Father Stanley
Lubungo, M.Afr.*

Father Stanley Lubungo, M.Afr., Superior General of the Missionaries of Africa, has been appointed by Pope Leo XIV to serve as a member of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

Born in Zambia and elected Superior General in 2016, Father Lubungo has provided steady and visionary leadership to the Society. His appointment to this important Vatican body is a recognition of his service and the growing global role of missionary congregations like the Missionaries of Africa.

The Dicastery is responsible for supporting and guiding religious institutes and societies of apostolic life throughout the Catholic Church. Father Lubungo is one of five new members from Africa named to the Dicastery, highlighting the continent’s increasingly prominent voice within the Church.

From here in the United States, we join in congratulating Father Lubungo and praying for him as he begins this new responsibility in service to consecrated life around the world.

ATAKPAMÉ, TOGO

CLEAN WATER FOR A SCHOOL IN TOGO



Workers install the new 200-foot well at Collège Notre Dame d'Afrique.

Thanks to the generous response to our 2024 Christmas appeal, the students and staff at Collège Notre Dame d'Afrique in Atakpamé, Togo now have reliable access to clean, drinkable water—right on campus.

Previously, more than 550 students had to cross a busy and dangerous boulevard each day just to fetch water, often from unsafe sources. The risk of accidents and illness was constant.

With a grant from the U.S. Missionaries of Africa and support from the school community, a 200-foot borehole was drilled and a small water tower installed to distribute clean water throughout the school grounds.

“The water is clear and safe,” wrote Sister Diana Woegbloedo, the headmistress. “We now have permanent water at the school. This is a real blessing for our students and staff. We are deeply grateful.”

This project is a direct result of your compassion. Because of you, these students no longer have to risk their safety or drink contaminated water. They now have health, dignity, and peace of mind.

SINDOU, BURKINA FASO

BUILDING PEACE AMONG REFUGEES

Conflicts across the Sahel region continue to force people from their ancestral homes. In response, Catholics in Burkina Faso are reaching out to comfort the displaced. At Uganda Martyrs Parish in Sindou, eastern Burkina Faso, parishioners and staff—supported by the U.S. Missionaries of Africa—are leading efforts to meet the needs of refugee families.

With a small grant, the parish first trained 25 local leaders from different villages to better understand the challenges displaced people face and how to offer meaningful help. From there, parish volunteers stepped in to meet urgent needs like food, shelter, and clean water.

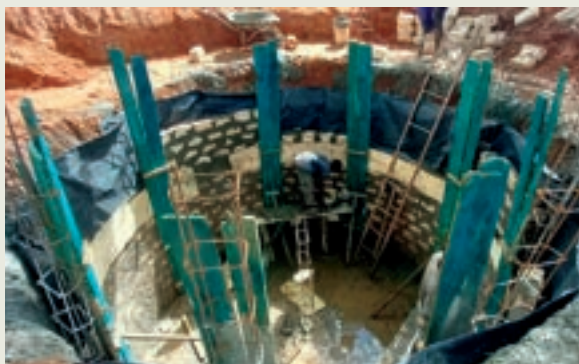
Beyond emergency aid, the parish began offering micro-grants to help families start small businesses. These included making and selling jewelry, soap, and other handmade goods. Larger micro-grants helped families raise chickens and pigs—efforts that not only generated income but also addressed local hunger.

Missionary of Africa Father Joshua Masive Musyoki, the parish pastor, reports that these efforts have helped the parish build trust with displaced families. That trust is essential, as the number of people seeking help continues to grow each day.

This outreach was made possible thanks to the generous response to our August 2023 appeal for relief in the Sahel region.

TARASAA, KENYA

CLEAN WATER FOR ST. CATHERINE SCHOOL



St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish in Tarasaa, Kenya has completed a major improvement for its primary school: a new rainwater harvesting system that brings clean water directly to campus.

With leadership from Father Fidèle Macara, M.Afr., the project included upgraded roofing and gutters, an underground cistern, and piping to safely collect and store rainwater. The school serves 150 children from the Pokomo ethnic group, where most families are subsistence farmers.

In this Muslim-majority region—where Christians make up just 20% of the population—education and access to clean water are powerful tools for transformation. Support from our donors makes this type of project possible.

A mason builds the walls of the underground cistern at St. Catherine Parish in Tarasaa, Kenya.



Creating jewelry in Sindou—one of several ways parish-backed micro-grants are helping displaced families earn a living.

HONORING OUR DEPARTED LOVED ONES ON ALL SOULS' DAY

On November 2nd, we observe All Souls' Day, a time to remember and pray for the souls of the departed. This sacred occasion invites us to lift up our loved ones who have passed, offering our prayers to help them enter God's eternal presence. The Missionaries of Africa are privileged to remember your loved ones through Mass requests. These Masses will be celebrated by our member priests in Africa, who continue their vital ministries in some of the most underserved regions.

By requesting a Mass, you also support our priests and the Missionaries of Africa's work in education, healthcare, and community development across Africa. Every donation made in memory of a loved one strengthens our mission to serve those most in need.

How to Remember Your Loved Ones:

1. **Request a Mass:** Have your loved one included in our special intentions for All Souls' Day.

2. **Make a Donation:** Support the Missionaries of Africa's work through a charitable gift in memory of the departed.

To submit your Mass request or donation, please visit missionariesofafrica.org or send your request by mail using the enclosed Mass request card.

Thank you for remembering the souls of the faithful departed while supporting the ongoing work of the Missionaries of Africa. Your generosity makes a lasting impact on both the living and the deceased.



WAYS TO SUPPORT OUR MISSION . . .

- Join our Friends of Hope monthly giving plan.
- Make a Memorial Gift in memory of a loved one.
- Celebrate a birthday, wedding or anniversary with a donation to our works in Africa.
- Donations of stock, securities, bonds or annuities provide the same benefit as a cash gift.
- Life Insurance: consider naming the Missionaries of Africa as a beneficiary.
- Bequests: an estate gift to support the ongoing work of the Missionaries of Africa.

Donate here:



Charitable IRA Transfers

Donors age 70 1/2 or older can transfer a contribution each year directly from a traditional IRA account. This may satisfy a portion or all of the annual required minimum distribution (RMD) and serve as a qualified charitable distribution for your IRA, which can decrease your tax burden even if you are no longer itemizing deductions.*

How to make a Charitable Gift?

Donors should contact their IRA bank or broker/administrator to request an IRA distribution transfer to the Missionaries of Africa. Instruct your administrator to issue a check to:

Society of Missionaries of Africa, Inc.
Development Office
1622 21st Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009-1003

* *Always consult your tax preparer for your state regulations.*

For more information, call us at: 877-523-4662

or visit: www.missionariesofafrica.org or email: info@missionariesofafrica.org

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**The Africa Report is published four times a year by the
Missionaries of Africa | 1622 21st Street NW | Washington, DC 20009-1003 | 202-232-5995**

Volume 2025 17 #3 | © Copyright Society of Missionaries of Africa, Inc.