

Missionary Experience of Sr Jacinta Nwachukwu, HHCJ, in the Archdiocese of St Boniface, Canada

By the invitation of Archbishop emeritus, Émilius Goulet, my missionary experience started nine years ago, upon my arrival in St Boniface Archdiocese, Winnipeg, Canada on the 16th of March 2006.

As a nun coming from Nigeria in West Africa and being the first time of leaving my country, I had no idea of what the unknown would be.

And so my first experience of the unknown was the weather difference and the acceptance of the shock of the difference. I experienced a very cold winter weather which was the opposite of the warm weather of my country, Nigeria. But although I had the shock of the cold weather, the people of God were not cold. They were warm and friendly. I appreciated so much the warm welcoming and their friendliness which confirm the myth of Manitoba "Friendly Manitoba".

I also had to accept the hard reality of seeing less number of people in our parish churches especially the children and the young people on daily and Sunday masses compared to the population in my country where the parishes are usually filled with people both young and old on weekdays and Sunday masses. At the same time also, although the parishes are not usually filled, I realized that there are still some young people thirsting and yearning for God but needs sense of direction. Some we get to meet, some are still searching and some we are searching for. This then gives me the hope that the church in Canada is still alive and there is still hope.

As the charism of my congregation invites us to serve wherever we are needed, few months after my arrival, I started a volunteer job in Centre Taché. This centre is a reminder to us of the great job that religious congregations did in the past in Canada. As I learned, the centre was started by the Grey Nuns. Their legacy lives on as I have the opportunity of offering spiritual care services to my fellow brethren who are sick and aged. The fruit of their hard work I believe will live on for life in the church of St Boniface and the whole of Canada. Still in line with serving wherever we are needed as the charism of my congregation. I was also given a job to work in the kitchen /cafeteria of the Archdiocese of St Boniface. Here, I got to meet the retired priests who worked hard in the past and are now retired. Meeting them oftentimes leaves me with one question " where are the young seminarians"? Where are future priest to take the place of the retired ones? To God is the glory that at the moment we have about six or seven young seminarians for the Archdiocese.

In general, coming to Archdiocese of St Boniface, has been a great light and source of new insight and learning for me, to deepening my faith in Christ as a religious and to what the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

Sr Jacinta Nwachukwu, HHCJ