Lasallian District of West Africa (DILAO) – New Perpetual Vows

The Lasallian District of West Africa (DILAO), made up of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea-Conakry, Niger and Togo, is preparing to celebrate the pronouncing of perpetual vows by four Brothers of the Christian Schools: **Louis Atikpo, Christophe Ekoue Teko, Jean-Paul Agba and Élisée Lare**.

The celebration, scheduled for **28 December 2024**, will be held at the Church of St. John the Baptist de La Salle de Cacavelli, in the presence of the Brother Visitor of the District, Br. Rodrigue Toeppen, the Bishop of the Archdiocese of Lomé, Bishop Isaac Jogues Gaglo, Bishop Célestin-Marie Gaoua, Bishop of Sokodé and Bishop Dominique Guigbile of Dapaong.

The young Brothers will also be accompanied by the various local parish communities and their families.

The District of DILAO, comprising around 85 Brothers, 21 active communities and some twenty educational communities, can now count on the definitive adherence to the educational charism of St. John Baptist de La Salle by the four young Brothers, who describe themselves as ready and enthusiastic to embrace a lifelong commitment.



Brother Élisée Lare, born in 1990, is the eldest of six brothers. In 2008, he expressed to his parish priest his desire to enter the small seminary 'Payén Saint Clément' in Dapaong to become a priest, thus beginning his second class at the Saint Athanase College under the guidance of the Brothers of the Christian Schools there. Thanks to his providential encounter with them, and his passion and love for the education of children and young people, Brother Élisée became fascinated by the Brothers' vocation and life.

After obtaining a degree in Sociology, Br Élisée began his formation in 2014-2015 at the Togoville postulancy. The novitiate in the following two years (2015-2017)

and his first religious profession took place in Bobo-Dioulasso. This was followed by missionary experiences, consolidation of the initial formation received at the novitiate, and enrolment in the Higher Institute of Pedagogical and Religious Sciences, where he earned a Degree in Educational Sciences. As of September 2024, Brother Élisée was appointed District Sectretary, at the same time, he taught some courses at the *Complexe scolaire Saint Jean-Baptiste de La Salle* in Bolibana. “During these years -says Brother Élisée- I let myself be lead by Christ, following the example of Saint John Baptist de La Salle, for the educational service of children and young people. Today, with God’s grace, I want to commit myself forever to the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, together and in association with the Brothers and all the lay partners, to be with them a point of reference, and an ambassador of hope and peace for children and young people, and also for adults in precarious and vulnerable situations”.



Brother Jean-Paul Agba, born in 1984, after graduating from the *Lycée Moderne* in Sokodé in 2007, he enrolled in the Philosophy Department at the University of Lomé where he earned a Degree in Cultural Diversity and Development under the guidance of the head of the philosophy department at the time, His Excellency Octave Nicoué Broum.

His call to religious consecration came about unexpectedly, so much so that the statement of Saint John Baptist De La Salle: “God, who conducts all things with wisdom and gentleness, and who is not at all accustomed to force the inclination of men, wishing to draw me (…), has done so in a quite imperceptible way and in a short time; so that one commitment led me into another, without my having foreseen it in the beginning”, struck him deeply. “In fact, -says Brother Jean-Paul- I was seduced by the Lord’s attitude towards me in the same way that the Founder was involved, so much so that the desire to follow Christ more closely grew in me”.

In 2013 his adventure began. Strongly wishing to become a Brother of the Christian Schools to get involved in the educational mission, from the Juniorate, he continued his journey to the Postulancy in Togoville. After this stage, he was admitted to the Inter Africain Novitiate *Notre Dame de Grâce* in Bobo-Dioulasso

in Burkina Faso. After 2 years of Novitiate, he made his first religious profession on 13 June 2018 in Bobo Dioulasso and was sent to Benin, where he experienced 2 years of community life. Subsequently in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, he continued his formation. Since 2022 to date, he has been on mission in Guinea Conakry, where he serves as Director of Studies at the De La Salle Vocational Training Centre.

“The passion to work with God’s grace for the integral development of young people, the joy of living in community with the Brothers, and the happiness of being considered an ordinary servant, sums up all my commitment, which I would like to confirm definitively with God’s grace,” Br Jean-Paul concludes enthusiastically.



Brother Christophe Ekoue Teko, born in 1974, holds a Degree in Pedagogy. In August 2014, the Brothers of the Christian Schools invited him to a vocational camp in Bohicon. In October 2014, he entered the Postulancy of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. In 2015 he was admitted to the inter-African Novitiate in Bobo Dioulasso. In 2017 he made his first vows, and was then sent on mission to Benin in the Akassato community from 2017 to 2019. In September 2019, he received an invitation to Abidjan, at the CELAF Higher Institute, to continue his studies in Education Sciences and a subsequent training in Dapaong for a duration of three years. Since September 2024, he has been on mission in Guinea Conakry.

“I have consecrated myself to the Lord to gain the freedom to love unconditionally, to ensure service to the poor and for the building up of the kingdom of God through the educational service of young people and children, especially the most needy”, says Brother Christophe; “also and above all, taking into account fraternity in diversity, I would like to make myself available for community services in a spirit of openness, solidarity, subsidiarity and respect, sharing joys and concerns with others”.



Brother Louis Eli Kokou Atikpo, born in 1989 in Lomé, earned a high school Diploma. Following a chance encounter with a young Brother of the Christian Schools, he attended their vocational camps to get to know them better. After this experience, Brother Louis applied and was admitted to the Brothers' Postulancy in Togoville in 2014. From 2015 to 2017 he did the Notre Dame de Grâce inter-African Novitiate in Bobo-Dioulasso and made his first vows in the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools on 9 June 2017. From 2017 to 2020, he continued his formation in the Scholasticate of the Brothers' Scholasticate in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) and graduated in Pedagogical and Religious Sciences from the CELAF (African Lasallian Centre). From 2020 to 2022 he was sent to Akassato in Benin. From 2022, he joined the community in Lomé, enrolling in the History Degree course at the University of Lomé. "My commitment to life as a Brother is part of a path of holiness through a fraternity supported by the community orientations of the Brothers and the District. I hope to be a good guide for the young people entrusted to me, for the glory of God," says Brother Louis.

To all the Brothers who will make their perpetual vows, we extend the warmest wishes on behalf of the entire Lasallian Family, so that their total adherence to the Founder's charism may be a further testimony of a heartfelt and living commitment to the educational mission, especially in those territories most in need of service and witness.

* ***Source: District of DILAO***