



Fr. Cletus Basekela

Fr. Cletus was born July 24, 1945 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Central Africa. From 1972 to 1997 the country was called Zaire. Fr. Cletus is the third eldest of six brothers and two sisters, all of whom are living in the Congo. He lost both his parents and one young brother.

Fr. Cletus was thirteen when he entered the High School Seminary which then was called "Petit Séminaire". He was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Kananga in the Congo on August 1, 1971 at St. Francis Xavier Church in Katende, his home parish. Father's first assignment was to teach in the boarding High School Seminary in Kabwe, an assignment that lasted one year.



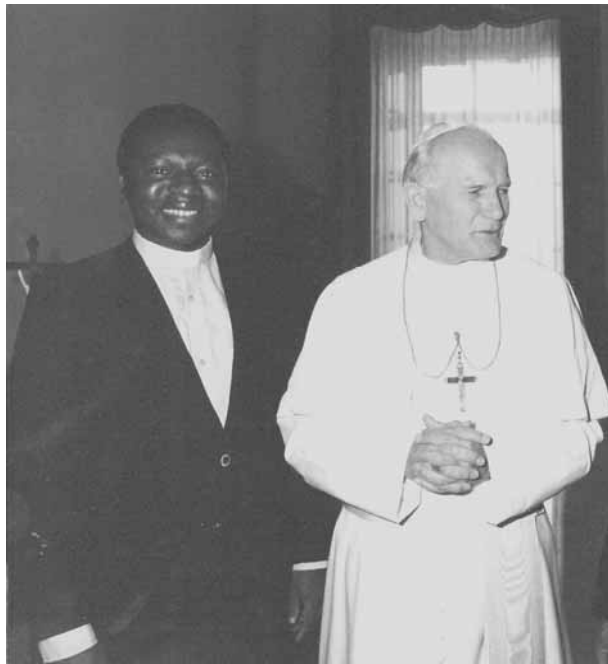
Celebration of his 40th
Anniversary of Priestly Ordination
July 31, 2011

10:30 am Mass

In August of 1972, Father went to Rome for further studies at the "Università Pontificia Salesiana" where he stayed five years. His studies were crowned with a doctorate in Classics (Roman and Greek languages, literature, history and cultures).

During his stay in Rome, Fr. Cletus took every opportunity to learn other modern languages; he spent his first summer abroad (1973) studying English in London at the Regent School of English. During two other summers (1974 and 1975), he replaced a pastor in New York, on Staten Island, at St. John's Catholic Parish on Jackson Street. In the summers of 1976 and 1977, Father spent time in Germany practicing his German doing ministry in parishes in the Nürnberg and Bamberg dioceses.

Back home again in September 1977, Fr. Cletus was appointed pastor in a rural parish at St. Monica's church where he ministered for five years. During this time, he was able to start a twinning relationship between his parish and another parish in Italy, in Sicily, the diocese of Catania, the city of Biancavilla. In the name of this relationship, the two pastors visited each other almost every other year. It was during one of these visits that Fr. Cletus was able to concelebrate the morning mass with Pope John Paul II in his private chapel in Rome. In 1982, Fr. Cletus was moved to the city of Kananga to start a new parish dedicated to St. Peter and Paul. He ministered as pastor there until 1999 when he moved to the United States.



In the meantime, despite these assignments to lead parishes, Father Cletus was also used by the Congolese government as a visiting professor in a State University and as a full time professor in a College for almost twenty years. In March 1982, he was also appointed Vicar General for the Archdiocese of Kananga, a

Congratulations!

Under an agreement between his own Archbishop and Archbishop Harry Flynn, Fr. Cletus arrived in the United States in March 1999 for a sabbatical which later was changed by both Archbishops into permanent residence. His first assignment in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis in July 2000 was at St. Mark's in St. Paul as Associate Pastor. In July 2001 he was moved from St. Mark and sent as Associate Pastor to Mary Mother of the Church in Burnsville. This assignment lasted six years. On August 1, 2007, Fr. Cletus was appointed Parochial Administrator at St. Jerome's in Maplewood. Today Fr. Cletus, as priest, is incardinated in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and he is also an American citizen.

Looking back, Fr. Cletus is surprised and doesn't understand how he was able to perform all his many duties without dying of it! He has also discovered that a language that is not your mother tongue is lost when you don't use it regularly; he recognizes that he is losing his German and his Greek.

