

To Brother Roger HOUNGBEDJI and to all the brothers of the new  
Vice-Province of St. Augustine in West Africa

The erection of the *Vice-Province of St. Augustine in West Africa* is an occasion for great joy, not only for the friars who form part of the regional vicariate that belongs to the Province of France, but also for the whole Order. We cannot but rejoice, for we are witnesses that our life and our mission, inspired by the preaching of our father Saint Dominic, have taken root in this vast region of the African continent, and have given birth to a new entity.

As a vice-province you will guarantee a renewed presence in the pilgrim Church in Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Benin and in Burkina Faso. A song of gratitude immediately goes up to the Lord for all the things he has done in you since the arrival of the first friars in Dakar, Senegal: *Magnificat!* At the same time, the canonical erection of the vice-province invites you to look to the future while pronouncing the word that is so full of hope: *Fiat!*

In its plenary session held on Friday, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009, the General Council carefully studied the petition presented by the chapter of the Regional Vicariate celebrated in 2007, and confirmed by the extended council of the Province of France which met in June 26 and 27, 2008. It also studied the letter of the Prior Provincial (29<sup>th</sup> January 2009) presented in the dossier “The Regional Vicariate of West Africa towards becoming a Vice-Province” together with the pertinent documents; and lastly the report of the Canonical Visitation which was carried out in your communities from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 2009.

Having taken into consideration all this information, and following the unanimous vote of the General Council (cfr *LCO* 256) I formally erect a new Vice-Province of the Order in West Africa, in the following terms:

- 1. Title:** The Vice-Province will bear the name “**Vice-Province of Saint Augustine in West Africa**”.
- 2. Territory:** The territory of the Vice-Province corresponds globally to that of the Region of West Africa according to the geopolitical delimitation of the Regional Conference of Bishops of West Africa. At present the Order has been implanted on the territories that belong to the Republic of Senegal, the Republic of the Ivory Coast, the Republic of Benin and the Burkina Faso. For a possible implantation of the Order in other countries in the region, when the time arrives, the Vice-Province Province could ask the Master of the Order and his council or to the General Chapter for an extension of the territory in which it is present.
- 3. Priors and houses:** All the priories and houses situated in the above mentioned territory, with their goods and possessions, movable and immovable property will be transferred to the jurisdiction of the new Vice-Province.

4. **Affiliation:** The following friars are affiliated to the Vice-Province, ... [a list is presented in the original document – editor’s note]
5. **Officials of the Vice-Province :** While taking into consideration the present circumstances, the consultations that were carried out and the unanimous vote of the General Council, I declare that as from next July 8, the day in which the extended council is due to start (and which has already been programmed for the Regional Vicariate), all brothers who on that date hold an office in the Regional Vicariate of West Africa (which until then belongs to the Province of France) shall become officials of the new Vice-Province (for example, the regional prior will be the vice-provincial, the councillors of the vicariate will be councillors of the Vice-Province, etc).
6. By means of this letter, I convoke the first extended council of the Vice-Province (programmed for July 8) in Saint Dominic’s Priory, Abidjan, according to *LCO* 375 (Cfr this present decree, n° 5). I also declare that the following will participate with a right to speak and vote (*vox et votum*):
  - a. The new vice-provincial, Bro Roger Houngbedji;
  - b. The members of the council of the Vice-Province: Bro Sibdé Sempore (former regional prior); Bro Benjamin Sombel Sarr (Regent of Studies); Bro Bertrand Akpagbe, Bro Maurice Yelome, Bro Georges Alahou and Bro Marcel Koudoro (Syndic);
  - c. The master of novices (Bro Georges Alahou, already included as councillor); the masters of students, Bro Pierre-Paul Missehoungbe (Abidjan) and Bro Auguste Bandeira (Yamoussoukro);
  - d. The conventual priors: Bro Innocent Gbétégan, conventual prior of Cotonou; Bro Maurice Yelome (already included as councillor).
  - e. The superiors of the houses: Bro Adama Dominique Tapsoba; Bro Bertrand Akpagbe (already included as councillor);
  - f. The moderator of studies, Bro Brice Bini.
7. Two student delegates from those listed above in n° 4 (one from the community of Abidjan and one from the community of Yamoussoukro) elected by the students themselves, in analogy with *LCO* 494 § III, shall participate with a right to speak but not to vote.
8. Other friars can be invited according to the judgment of the present regional prior with his council (those invited will have a right to speak but not to vote).
9. The Prior Provincial of the Province of France, Bro Bruno Cadoré, or his delegate, will be specially invited to participate in the extended council of the Vice-Province.
10. The extended council shall meet to review the decisions taken during the last chapter of the Regional Vicariate (2007) while taking into consideration the Acts

of the General Chapter of Bogotá (2007). It will also study how to put into practice the conclusions of the last canonical visitation. It will revise the statutes of the Vice-Province (the statutes and the economical statute) in conformity with the observations sent to Bro Roger Hounbedji. It will review the *Ratio Formationis* and the *Ratio Studiorum*, and it will deal with matters that are deemed useful for the good of the Vice-Province (Cf. *LCO* 375 § II), etc.

11. As there is no prevision for the election of the Vice-Provincial, of the councillors and of other officials, the Vice-Provincial and his council will remain in office until the celebration of the first chapter of the Vice-Province which will be held during the summer of 2011 as planned by the Chapter of the Vicariate in 2007.
12. The extended council should hold “elections for the General Chapter”, so as to elect three different brothers for the following offices (Cfr *LCO* 521 § II):
  - a. Socius of the Vice-Provincial for the next Elective General Chapter in 2010 (the socius has the right to take the place of the Vice-Provincial in case it would be impossible for the latter to participate) (Cfr *LCO* 520 § III).
  - b. A diffinitor for the second General Chapter, if this would become necessary before the first Chapter of the Vice-Province programmed for 2011 (*LCO* 521 § I);
  - c. A socius for the diffinitor for a second General Chapter (Cfr *LCO* 520 § II)
13. The acts containing the decisions of the extended council will be sent to the General Curia for approval. They will then be valid until the publication of the acts of the **first Chapter of the Vice-Province** programmed for the summer of 2011 (Cfr *LCO* 362 -364).
14. The present decree will come into effect on the first day of the extended council, which was fixed for next July 8, in St. Dominic’s Priory, Abidjan.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Given at our Priory of Santa Sabina, in Rome, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, Memorial of the Translation of Our Father Saint Dominic.

Bro Carlos A. Azpiroz Costa op  
Master of the Order

Bro Cletus Nwabuzo op  
*A secretis*