

**BY AIR MAIL**

**AIR LETTER**

IF ANYTHING IS EN-  
CLOSED THIS LETTER  
WILL BE SENT BY  
ORDINARY MAIL.



Miss Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo,

Av. Duque de Loulé 90 r/c,

LISBON

PORTUGAL

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Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Sender's name and address :-

J. C. Roche,  
Fourah Bay College,  
Freetown,  
Sierra Leone.

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Fourah Bay College,  
Freetown,  
Sierra Leone.

Dear Miss Pintasilgo,

March 12th, 1955

I must apologise for my long delay in replying to your letter, and even now I cannot give you full information on all the points you mention. The position of a Catholic student group in a West African University is so entirely different from that of a Catholic society in even a Protestant country such as England, that the question of objectives must be studied quite outside the European environment.

Fourah Bay College was formerly a Protestant Mission college and was only recently converted into a university of the normal type ~~in~~ with the support of large funds from the British Government. The country is predominantly pagan and is economically undeveloped. Out of two million inhabitants only 60,000 are Christian and 20,000 of these are Catholic; Moslem influence is very great. The Catholic group in the college is only 30 in number and half of these are from Nigeria (where the Catholic body is much larger). So we have a very small Catholic group in a ~~small~~ small Christian (though mainly non-Catholic) college in a pagan land. Most are men, but from the few women we may find someone to start a correspondence with you. The students are now preparing to publish a Catholic Students' ~~Bulletin~~ Bulletin and you shall have a copy as soon as possible.

Our Society is very new; I started it last year. Nevertheless, we have made progress in small things. We have pressed for transport to make regular Mass in Freetown possible, and we have 100 per cent attendance. We have secured the separation of the Anglican church service from the University Congregations, so that the Catholic students may have their University Mass separately. The Bishop is our close supporter and his Secretary, Fr. Jackson, is our Chaplain. The students hold Rosary meetings every week and Catholic prayer meetings are joined by a number of non-Catholics. With the help of an appeal made in the English "Catholic Herald" last year we have received many donations of books, and have started a Catholic library (the only one in the country), and we have a regular "study evening".

I do not think there will be any money for any of our students to attend the Congress in Nottingham this year, but I shall certainly be there and hope to read a paper. Will you be there?

On the matter of objectives, our Society has formed a special sub-committee to study the question, and we hope to have their report soon. In Sierra Leone, as in other parts of British West Africa, it is the Catholic student bodies that are likely to be leaders in Catholic Action -- the number of Catholic graduates and professional men is so few (and there are no important professional bodies yet, apart from Catholic Teacher Associations in some parts. In Sierra Leone there are no Catholic professional bodies at all. Our Newman Society at Fourah Bay is the nucleus of things to come.

One of our biggest problems is to overcome the "isolation" which the small Catholic body feels. Even students are not aware of the

great Catholic world outside (they are astonished to learn that there are 3 million Catholics in Great Britain and 30 million in U.S.A., or that the Christian world is in fact predominantly Catholic). The graduate who takes charge of a school up-country in the primitive "bush" village is cut off from culture and civilization and his only contact with educated Catholics may be the Father (usually an Irish Holy Ghost Father) at the small mission. There is need for a good Catholic newspaper. Our students are now helping in the production of the "~~Bo~~ ~~CMSA~~ Catholic Monthly" a very small and inadequate newsheet now being printed by the Holy Ghost Fathers in Bo. Lack of money is the greatest difficulty in Catholic Action here. The students are very poor, often lacking money to buy text books, and there are no funds outside the small income of the Church Authorities. There is no rich Catholic business community such as exists in other countries. With a certain income of a few hundred pounds there is an immense amount that we could do.

There is the situation briefly; I hope that I will have the opportunity some time of explaining to you personally further details of the special conditions which exist here.

You may write to me in French if you wish, and I will write in English. I hope to arrange for some of my students to write to you shortly.

Yours sincerely,

*J. Roche*

Senior Lecturer in Commerce.

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