Postulate House Newsletter



Fugar - Nigeria

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

... Making known God's goodness.

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Some of the Postulants presently at the formation house

Postulants with Sr. Uche Onyekonwu, SNDdeN

MY FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR

I got to know about the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur when I was at the university where I met two of the sisters studying there. We were good friends. One holiday, one of the sisters, who happened to be my course mate invited me to visit her in her community. At first, I was reluctant in honouring the invitation. Fortunately, the sister met me again where I was coaching high school students during the holiday and reminded me of my promise to visit her which I hadn't fulfilled. This prompted my decision to fulfill the promise. I visited her community on a Saturday. To my greatest surprise, when she came out to receive me, she asked me to go inside that the sisters have been waiting for me and she wants to buy something at shocked because I only came to see her not the sisters because I did not know them before. On a second thought, I asked myself, how would I go inside to meet the people I have not met before all by myself? I managed to gain some courage and went inside as she had instructed me. Immediately I knocked and opened the door, the sisters all chorused, 'the long awaited visitor is here!' with big smiles on their faces. My tension calmed down and I went in to greet them.

The hospitality they gave me made me feel at home and comforted. After a long discussion with one of the sisters, they later left me to discuss with the particular sister I had come to see. While we were discussing, she showed me the picture of their leadership team. I noticed that one of them in

the junction and will join us shortly. I was

the picture was the sister I was discussing with earlier. I asked her; "what is Leadership Team?" she explained it as leaders of the Nigeria province. I have not heard the word 'Leadership Team' before. What I know people call leaders of the Congregation is 'Mother General'. My ideology about Mother General is different from what I experienced that day. I see Mother General just as the president of a country that you can't have access to, until you book an appointment and follow due protocols. To my amazement, I did not only sit with "Mother General", she also kept me company with interesting discussions! This was a turn-around for me. It gave me the courage and confidence to aspire to be a Sister of Notre Dame. Her simplicity and humility got me so much overwhelmed. No wonder, St. Julie said in one of her letters in the month of January: "Plenty of real

simplicity", Julie told her first sisters. "That is your virtue for this month, and the subject of your meditation". [Julie, L 259]

In same vein, the two sisters studying with me at the university have been so kind, caring and charitable to me and other students. I experienced the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur as sisters who live a life of simplicity, hospitality and charity. Their zeal to help the poor and educate the young ones is commendable.

Just as they say: first impression matters a lot. The first impression I got from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was a good one and those virtues I saw in them, I admire a lot. This led me to join them so as to join in making God's goodness known to the whole world and living out the exemplary life of St. Julie Billiart our Foundress.



Chidera Nnabuchi, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant





Holistic Formation

It is very important that those discerning their vocation in religious life are given holistic formation so as to have a solid formation which will lead them all through their life. How can this holistic formation be given? The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulate Formation House, Fugar, introduces her postulants to the four pillars of formation namely: Human, Spiritual, Intellectual, and Pastoral areas of formation.

Human formation: The postulants are helped through human formation to know how to cultivate wide-eyed open awareness concerning who they are today with all their gifts and limitations. They are also assisted to understand and appreciate who and what have been significant people, events and things that have shaped and formed them into the persons they are today. They are also exposed to the fact that their distant past and their recent past impact "how" they will go about in helpful and unhelpful ways interacting with themselves and others, the things and tasks of the day with their God.

Intellectual formation: Serrao (2010) states that intellectual formation is a fundamental aspect of one's formation by which she/he participates in the light of God's mind and seek to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God. The purpose of intellectual formation is to enable the postulants to acquire an extensive and solid learning in the sacred and secular sciences that can give a firm formation to her faith.

Pastoral formation: The aim of pastoral formation is to prepare postulants to enter into the charity of Christ in serving his people, and it is a practical application of human, spiritual, and intellectual formation.

Spiritual formation: It introduces the postulants to a deep communion with Jesus Christ, the good shepherd and leads them to the total submission of their life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude toward the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church.

Whenever any of these four pillars of formation is lacking in the life of a formadee, it becomes a problem. It is important to know that these four pillars of formation, if properly done, can be of help to the individual all through life both as a consecrated person or a lay person. Therefore, in the formation house of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur we try the best we can to give holistic formation to the postulants in formation in order to

equip them for life.

Sr. Lucy Anaele, SNDdeN Postulants Directress



FORMATION DISCERNMENT

Discernment is a process of journeying with God in order to determine if where I am presently is the right place for me. We periodically have classes on Discernment. It is one of the classes I enjoy because it is usually an interesting one and at the same time reflective. Practical examples are cited and it helps me think beyond the classroom. It was reflective because there were some special questions in the course of the class.

Below are some of the questions we do ask our formator or our formator asks us, some of the answers from her and some of the discussions that spring up as we discuss:

1. WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS IN THE FORMATION HOUSE AS A POSTULANT?

This life is between me and my God. It is a life of come and see. It is an interesting life if only I am open to it. My main aim and expectation is to listen, listen and listen attentively with my heart which leads to action and a life of prayer.

2. WHAT ARE YOUR FEARS?

Fear of not being able to achieve what is expected of me and the goals I set for myself. Fear of the unknown and above all, fear of death.

3. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD FORMATOR?

A good formator should learn how to appreciate and be sensitive in all the things she does. A good formator should be respected not feared. She is to be trustworthy. The formadees should feel free to say their mind whenever something happens.

A good formator must be God fearing. She is to be ever ready to listen to those she is forming and ready to always impart her good qualities on the formadees. A good formator should be able to live by example, both in the physical and spiritual aspects. Openness is very important too.

4. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD FORMADEE?

Open to unlearn, learn and relearn. Obedience, humility, perseverance and sacrifice.

Always ready to accept change, co-operate with the rules and regulations.

Always be free with everyone. Be open to suggestions and contribute positively to the life of the community. Don't live a pretentious life. Be ready to take correction with joy. Do not procrastinate, that is, be time conscious.

These have been keeping me as I continue to discern my vocation. I find it so interesting and it has gone a long way in helping me in my formation training.

In conclusion, it is actually God that calls. I continue to ask myself these questions: Who am I seeking? What am I seeking?

What stood out for me in this class is that I really need to embrace God in all



circumstances I may find myself, whether good or bad, because He knows me through and through even before I was born. Isaiah 43: 1.

Maria Oghiorumua Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant



WHAT IT ENTAILS TO WORK WITH THE POOR

The poor are very close to God's heart. No wonder, St. Julie says: "We exist only for the poor". However, it is not everyone who is graced with working with the poor. It takes the grace of God to work with the poor, especially the old and the sick. It is indeed a joyous thing to do as it expresses God's mercy and love through us to them.

We do home to home visitation as part of our formation training. Many people that we do visit are at the point of losing hope. Some persons had lost hope of obtaining help, care and love from anyone, but when they see us, it gives them courage that someone cares for them. It gives them joy to see us around even without food or money to alleviate their poverty. When we come back, we share our experiences. Actions spring up from our sharing as community.

I have never imagined that I could ever render help to the elderly or even visit the sick and care for them because I do get irritated easily. However, in the course of my formation, my ideology about the sick and elderly changed. I join my sisters to go for visitation every Thursday from 8am to 12pm. I was able to see reasons and the need to visit them. I was touched by my first experience on my first visit. We visited an old blind woman who lives alone. I was surprised at the joy that radiates from her heart. She recognizes the sisters' voices whenever the sisters go to visit her. She says, "The Angels have come to take care of me".

We will help her sweep her room and wash her plates and clothing. A member of our church gives her food once in a while. Sometimes she wouldn't have anything to eat. When it is time for us to leave, she feels as if we should live with her.

Another woman we visited made me shed tears. This beautiful woman was in serious pain; she could not do anything for herself. She depends totally on people to help her, even to eat. Seeing such situation for the first time touched me so deeply. We helped her do some cleaning in her house. She was very grateful for the things we did for her. These experiences made me understand that there are many people out there suffering and in hopeless situations. They are in need of our care and love even without giving them money or food; they are revived by our love, care, and encouragement.

Comfort Fredrick Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant During our visit to them, we were able to put smiles on their faces. I really thank God for His grace and the opportunity given to me to have the experience of working with the poor.



MORAL THEOLOGY

Moral theology is one of the topics we treat in Notre Dame formation house, Fugar. The lecturer is Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Bashir. Before I came to the formation house, I thought it was only the priests that learn things on Theology.

I learnt that theology came from a Latin word Theo-logia which means understanding of God. Theo- means God and logy- means understanding. According to St. Anselm, theology is faith seeking understanding.

Moral is relating to the principle of right and wrong behaviour. It also distinguishes between good and evil. Moral theology in Catholic Church is derived from four sources. They are: the scripture, tradition, reasons, and experience. I also learnt that there are four types of Theology namely: Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic or Dogmatic Theology and Practical Theology.

The Biblical Theology is the presentation of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. It focuses on

the teaching of the individual authors and books of the bible.

Historical Theology is the interpretation of scripture and the formation of the doctrine by the Church and bringing it to our world today to make us understand the scripture e.g. conversion of St. Paul.

The dogmatic Theology is a branch of theology that is concerned with the dogmas of the Church; the things that already exist and cannot be changed e.g. Mary, mother of God.

Practical Theology embraces the practical things we see and hear during Mass e.g. the homily. I got to know that the purpose of moral theology is to lead a human person to a life of holiness and eternal salvation. It is also to help the religious to understand the concept of love and life that helps to lead a life of obedience to the Deity. This class really exposed me to so many things about myself, about God, the Church, my neighbours, the scripture, and how to deal with some situations that spring up daily. I also learnt that Christ is present in everyone. We learnt other topics like Human Dignity, Human Action and Free Choice, Human Act, Sin, Law, Christian Love in Practice. They

Mary Ololade Agboola Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant were so helpful. I was able to discover myself and accommodate people as they are because they are the Christ I see every day of my life.



OUR COMPOUND



Notre Dame Formation House, Fugar, Edo State is in a peaceful and serene environment. Its beauty testifies to God's creativity. It is adorned with beautiful flowers of different kinds and colours. There are trees of different kinds such as cashew trees, mango trees, orange trees, sycamore trees etc and each bears fruits in abundance. It is like the Garden of Eden; we enjoy their fruits throughout the year.

A simple community building is seen on the compound with two gates, one gives way to the entrance of the compound while the second gate leads to the car park. There is a cemetery behind our building where our ancestors were buried, and a large farm where fruits crops like cassava, corn, groundnuts etc are planted. We equally have a poultry and a goat house.

A big statue of St. Julie, our Foundress, is erected at the entrance of the community building. She keeps smiling on us and on everyone that knocks on our door. St. Julie's love for children is displayed in this statue as she is with a little school girl, instructing her. This statue of St. Julie is beautified with flowers and concrete stones in a circular form, painted in white and black, looking like a roundabout. A chapel is directly attached to the main building where we celebrate liturgy and have our community prayers on a daily basis. We have a large sitting room where we welcome visitors. At the left hand side of the main gate is the security house. Both night guards and day guards stay there, while they patrol around the whole compound at intervals to keep close watch. We equally have workers' quarters where the gardeners and security persons stay after work.

The environment can actually be used as a venue for retreat, recollection, and other spiritual activities because it is a very quiet and peaceful place which really shows that it is a convent.

However, we have some challenges on the compound. We are not the only creatures of God that enjoy this peaceful and serene environment. There are so many reptiles like snakes on the compound. Periodically, one will accidentally see them close to our resident. It makes me feel scared of going to the farm alone or even take a walk around the compound.

One day, I was cleaning the goat house and saw a very big brown snake coming towards me in full speed. My heart beat raised so high that I could hear it in my ears and my body was shaking as if I was fainting. I started sweating profoundly, as if I was close to a hot fire or in a very hot region. I

Judith Akor,

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant

could not scream for help. To my greatest surprise, the snake diverted toward the house where we gather woods for cooking. I stood there shocked and could not move an inch. I was later rescued by the sisters who ran towards my direction at the screaming of my voice. I was still shaking in fear and shock as I followed them to the house. About an hour later, after the incident, I gathered courage to go back to the goat house to finish up my cleaning, but not without company this time. Some sisters were there with me to support me. It's a day I will never forget. I thank God for saving me from being attacked by a snake.

Due to this experience, my fears about going to the farm alone or bushy areas of the compound increased. I always search my environment for any reptiles before stepping my foot down. Nevertheless, I do not let this fear keep me from doing certain things that I ought to do such as picking of the cashew fruits and nuts, watering of plants etc. The support I get from my sisters on managing my fears has been great. On a whole, we support one another.

You are most welcome to our compound either to enjoy a weekend recollection or simply to be with us in this serene environment. You will not regret your decision.





It was a memorable day for me and my set. All four of us arrived the Postulate Formation House on 8th September, 2022. That very night, we were welcomed by our formators and the second year postulants. Announcements were made – that our reception to the Postulate Formation House will be taking place the next day.

On this beautiful day, we all woke up, got ready for Holy Mass at St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Fugar - a local parish where we shall be attending Masses daily. The church was beautifully decorated, and the environment very conducive for prayer. Many lay people joined us at the church for the liturgy. The Priest who celebrated the Mass that day was Rev. Fr. Polycarp. It was a simple and meaningful liturgy.

On returning to the community, we went straight to the chapel for morning prayer. The liturgist for the day was Mary Agboola. She led us at the morning prayer.

After morning prayer, we went to the dining hall for our breakfast. Upon entering the dining hall, I noticed this write-up and it captured my attention:

HAPPY HOME RECIPE

1 cup of friendship,
1 barrel of laughter.
2 cups of loyalty,
2 spoons of tenderness.
3 cups of forgiveness,
3 quarters of faith.
4 cups of love,
5 spoons of hope.
Take love and loyalty,



Martha Gyang Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Postulant

mix it thoroughly with faith, bless it with tenderness, kindness and understanding. Add friendship and hope, sprinkle abundantly with laughter. Bake it with sunshine. Serve daily with generous helpings.

The breakfast was decorative and delicious. However, I was reflecting on this Happy Home Recipe all through the breakfast period.

We were given the privilege to go and prepare for our grand reception while the second-year postulants prepared the dishes for the reception.

We went into the chapel to reflect and have some quiet time before the celebration began.

Around 12-noon, Sr. Evelyn Aririatu, SNDdeN came in from a nearby community. She was to receive us into the Postulate Formation House as Postulants. She was representing the Province Leadership Team at this occasion. The reception was simple, but very memorable. A solemn song was sung – Follow me, follow me, leave your home and family... Some reflective readings followed it and silent reflection. Each of us was given a medal engraved with the Congregational Logo on it. This will be our identity as SNDdeN Postulants until we graduate to the Novitiate hopefully in September 2024. A closing prayer was said.

After this, we all went to St. Julie's grotto for group photographs to mark the day. This was immediately followed by lunch. We enjoyed the delicacy that our seniors had prepared. I feel very much at home. Our good God is indeed very good!



HOLY WEEK CELEBRATION IN THE POSTULATE HOUSE

HOLY WEEK is when the church celebrates the mysteries of salvation accomplished by Christ in the last days of his earthly life. This began from his messianic entry into Jerusalem, which represents Palm Sunday, until his blessed passion, known as **Passiontide**, which is celebrated on Good Friday, and his glorious resurrection celebrated on Easter Sunday. It calls for sober and deeper reflection on the passion of Christ. It was indeed an awesome and interesting week for all the postulants, filled with lots of memorable activities.

It all started on Sunday 10th of April, 2022, which was **Palm Sunday** or **Passion Sunday**. On this day, we celebrated Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem. We went for Mass at our parish church where our palms were blessed, singing Hosanna to God in the highest.

Monday and Tuesday of the holy week is called **Menace** which is a way we make repercussion for our sins. Some priests in some parishes organize Easter confession on these days before the Triduum.

Our formators also taught it wise to organize recollection for us at **Redeemer Hill** on Monday, 11th of April, 2022. Redeemer Hill is a cool, quiet and conducive environment for prayers. It was the best recollection for me because it came after our major evaluation which we had on Friday. The theme of the recollection was; "*Here Is My Servant Whom I Uphold*". We were able to thank God for our giftedness, tell him of our limitations and seek solutions on how to work on them and improve on our giftedness to become better persons. I really thanked our formators for that wonderful inspiration. It helped us to drop the burdens we were carrying and have an emotional reunion among ourselves to start afresh.

Wednesday of the holy week is called **Spy Wednesday** because it was on this day that Judas Iscariot went to inform the Jews on how to get Jesus and made an agreement on the amount he will use to betray him. On this day also, we had our **Passover meal**. I had never experienced Passover meal before, not until last year. It was a celebration filled with many symbols that have great meaning.

At first, our formators were seen in a room where we will have the meal, arranging and setting the things needed all alone. Just as Jesus did, showing an example of a servant. At 4pm we gathered in the room. An introduction was made by the leader reminding us that **Passover** is the remembrance of the Jewish people's deliverance from the land of Egypt. God commanded Moses that the story of Passover be retold in each generation, and so it remains today the great feast of sacrifice, of deliverance, and of thanksgiving. After this, the mother of the family lights and blesses the feast day candles.

The first act of the Passover which is the benediction, follows...

we all took our cups of wine up and the mother of the house blessed it, after which we all took a sip of the wine.

The next traditional act of the seder is eating the Greens, the symbol that nature comes to life in springtime.

We used bitter leaf in place of the greens. We dip the bitter leaf in a salt water which represents the tears shed by the Israelites during their enslavement in Egypt and prayed, after which all ate it.

Next was the **Matzo** or **Unleavened Bread** which nourished the Jews in the days of affliction. Lifting the bread, the father says some words which remind us of the afflictions which our fathers encountered in the land of Egypt. We blessed the Lord who saved and delivered us. After this, all *break* a piece of bread with the person next to them and ate.

In order to retell the story of the Passover, it became traditional for the youngest in the family to ask a ritual question to the mother. These questions are similar but extend our understanding of the Passover into the New Testament.

A sister asks: Why is this night different from all other nights?

"In every generation a man must so regard himself as he came forth himself out of Egypt. Therefore, are we bound to give thanks, praise and to bless him who has brought us from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, from mourning to festival day, and from darkness to a great light. We who are followers of Christ know that through him we have passed from our slavery to sin to freedom in the spirit of the Father. For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old creation has gone and now the new one is here" answers another sister.

Second question: Why do we eat bitter herbs at this special meal?

"Our fathers were slaves in Egypt and their lives were made bitter, as we take this bitter herbs, we recall not only the bitterness of our fathers of old, but we also call to mind the pain in our own lives, pain that we are not asked to bear alone. Let us take eat not in fear but in trust and faith" answered another sister. *Then all ate of the bitter herbs*.

Third question: Why do we eat unleavened bread at this Passover table?

"When our fathers fled from pharaoh they left in great haste and had no time to bake their bread. They could not wait for the yeast to rise. As they fled through the desert, the sun beating down baked it into a flat unleavened bread. This night, Jesus has taken the bread of affliction and changed it into the bread of life. We being many are one bread, one body we share in the one life of Christ. Our bread is sweetened by the saving action of Jesus. Let us now break a piece of bread, dip it in the haroses and give it to the person on our right as a sign of unity and affection". (Haroses is a mixture of fruits, nuts, wine and cinnamon-resembles the brick and mortar used by the Jews in slavery to build the treasured cities of Pharaoh) said another sister. Then all took a piece of bread and share it after dipping it in haroses.

Fourth question: Why do we eat lamb at this meal?

The mother answered, "By the blood of the lamb the Israelites were spared from the angel of death, Christ, our lamb, sacrificed himself for us. By his blood we are saved, through his body we pass over to life in the Father".

The last question: Why do we drink the cup of wine this night?

The mother answered, "wine has been given to warm the hearts of men. Like our fathers of old, we drink in benediction and in thanksgiving; with Christ we lift the cup of the new covenant, his saving blood poured forth for us. Let us drink of the wine with joy and in thanksgiving".

Then all drank of the wine.

Before the Passover meal is eaten, the psalm of praise and thanksgiving was recited.

"O give thanks to the Lord for He is good.

For His love endures forever..."

... Making known God's Goodness

Together we all thanked the Lord, after which, all took another sip of wine.

At this point, we were all invited to partake in the paschal meal together praising the Lord.

At the end of the meal, there was a final blessing. The cups of wine were lifted for the fourth time as the father gives the blessings and some sisters proclaiming these words of blessings:

May God bless the whole house of Israel with freedom, and keep us safe from danger everywhere. Amen.

May God cause the light of his countenance to shine upon all men, and dispel the darkness of ignorance and of prejudice. May He be gracious unto us. Amen.

May God lift up His countenance upon our continent and render it a true land of liberty and a bulwark of justice. And may He grant peace unto us and all mankind. Amen.

Then the father concludes the prayers by saying:

"The Lord bless us and keep us; the Lord make His face to shine upon us and have mercy on us. The Lord grant us peace. *We all chorused* AMEN.

All drank the final sip of wine from their cups. *Thus ends the celebration of the paschal meal.*

Triduum starts on Holy Thursday and ends on Holy Saturday. On Holy Thursday, we gathered in the chapel in the morning for the lauds. During the prayer we demonstrated the washing of our feet. This act of ours remind us of how we ought to be servants to each other in *humility* and *simplicity*. Also, to be *charitable* to one another by lending a helping hand. These three virtues are also the core virtues of our congregation laid down for us by our foundress.

After this, we went to Immaculate Conception Cathedral to celebrate the Chrism Mass. On this day, the church celebrates chrism mass at the cathedral where all the priests renew their commitment to God and before the bishop. The bishop blesses the two oils called chrismatis –for confirmation and infirmorum – for the anointing of the sick and also consecrates the catechumen oil which is used at baptism and ordination of priests. This day is also known as the feast day for all priests because it is also the Lord's supper which is usually celebrated at night/evening.

In the evening, we went for the Lord 's Supper Mass at our parish. At this Mass, the priest in charge washes the feet of twelve men just as

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Jesus did to his disciples. At this night of the Lord's supper, there is also a vigil with the Lord, just as He told his disciples; **"Can you not stay with me just for an hour in prayer?"**

So, we stayed with the Lord for an hour when He had been reposed from the tabernacle to the altar of repose. This is done to keep watch with the Lord before He will be handed over to his executioners by Judas Iscariot. After this, great silence begins; no ringing of bells. During this time, we make use of local gong to call for meals; the altar is stripped naked and Mass is not concluded as usual.

On Good Friday, we went to church at 3pm to observe the last Stations of the Cross which demonstrates in a dramatic way the passion of Christ and puts us in a sorrowful mood. Mass is not celebrated as the church mourns for our Lord. The priest makes the unveiling of the crucifix, adoring and kissing of the crucifix is done by the members of the Church. Long intercessory prayers are made which involves "All kneel" and "All stand". We also observe fasting and abstain from meat on this day.

On Holy Saturday, we were all seen all around the house doing our charges and decorating it in preparation for the resurrection of our Lord which is on **Easter Sunday**. At night, we went for the Easter vigil mass. In the church, darkness was seen everywhere. We all gathered round the big fire prepared outside where the lighting of the paschal candle took place and procession was made into the church before all the lights were turned on. At this night, the exsultet is sung before the Liturgy of the Word. Several readings were read from the old testaments to the new testaments. Before the Gospel reading, the gloria was sung and the sound of bells was heard again in the church. Flowers were brought back to decorate the altar and the church. The altar cloth changes from purple to white and gold, after which the priest intones the alleluia three times, raising his voice by a step each time, before the responsorial psalm and the gospel are taken.

At this point every part of the Mass goes on as usual and there is joy and rejoicing because "*The Lord has risen as He said*".

It was indeed a solemn celebration; hope you enjoyed it and wished you were here with us... you can come and join us in this year's holy week celebration!

ChideraNnabuchi Maria Oghiorumua Mary Agboola. Second Year Postulants

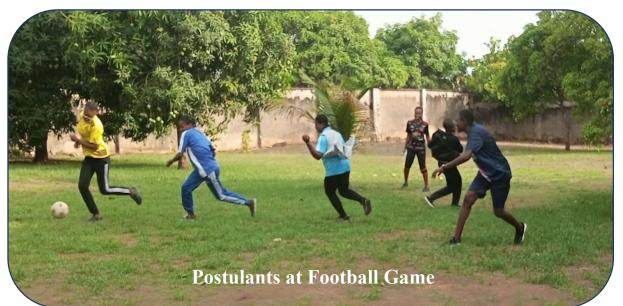
Photos Speaks





Postulants at Recreation









Postulants caring for the earth



Some of our Fruit Trees