

□ Reading time: 5 min.

He did not grow up in a Salesian environment. A maternal uncle, passing through Onitsha for work and struck by what he saw being done for young people, spoke to him about the sons of Don Bosco. From that suggestion, a journey began that took Fr. Peter Chinweike Morba from the village of Aguleri, in Anambra State, to Sierra Leone, then to the 27 missionary stations of Koko, in Kebbi State, and finally to the parish of Omole, in Lagos. In 2025, the Rector Major, Fr. Fabio Attard, appointed him provincial of Africa Nigeria Niger, the first native of that land to lead the Province, with 173 confreres and 19 houses across two Countries. Here he talks about his vocation, his teachers, and the challenges of evangelisation today.

Would you like to introduce yourself to the readers? Where were you born, and what path have you taken up to now?

My name is Fr. Peter Morba. I was born on 26 November 1976, in Aguleri, my village, in the Anambra East local government area, in Anambra State, Nigeria. I am a Catholic priest, a Salesian of Don Bosco. In addition to two degrees in philosophy and theology, I hold a postgraduate diploma in Education and am currently studying for a Master's in Clinical Psychology at Daystar University in Nairobi, Kenya.

I was ordained a priest on 7 July 2012, in my home diocese, the Archdiocese of Onitsha. After my ordination, I was sent to Sierra Leone, in charge of the oratory and as a parochial vicar. From there I went to Koko, in Kebbi State, to start a new mission of primary evangelisation. There I was the first parish priest, with 27 missionary stations. Then came the transfer to Lagos, as parish priest of the Church of the Holy Spirit, in the Omole Phase 1 neighbourhood. During those years, I was also appointed vice-provincial. After six years in Omole and three as vice-provincial, also in charge of formation, in 2025, the Rector Major, Fr. Fabio Attard, with the consent of his Council, entrusted me with the ANN Province.

How did you discover your Salesian vocation?

I did not grow up in a Salesian environment and, before joining, I knew very little about this religious family. I got to know them thanks to a maternal uncle, who at the time had gone on business to the Salesian community in Onitsha. Knowing that I was considering the priesthood, he spoke to me about them and encouraged me to give it a try. He liked what he saw being done for young people. In Onitsha, the Salesians were then running a technical training and youth ministry centre, always full of activities. I think this is what attracted him.

On my first visit, I was admitted to the Aspirantate. I was surprised by this, because everything happened so simply and quickly. And since then, by the grace of God, I have stayed.

Which figures - saints, educators, family members - have inspired you most?

St. Francis of Assisi and Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi, who is from my own village. Upon joining the Salesians, I was particularly struck by the early part of St. John Bosco's life.

Then there were the confreres I met during the Aspirantate, the pre-novitiate, and the novitiate: the late Fr. Vittorio Albasini, Fr. Nicholas Cirrapica, the late Fr. Italo Spagnola, and many others. They weighed heavily in my choice and my perseverance. In my family, my grandmother, my mother, and a younger sister of hers, now deceased, taught me to love God and to offer my life to Him, for the service of others.

Which moments of your formation left the biggest mark on you?

The novitiate had a great impact: studying the Constitutions, delving deeper into Salesian spirituality. And then the practical training, which was very enriching for me. It was there that I began to develop some leadership skills and to learn that certain decisions do not only affect my life, but also the lives of the people around me. And it was there that I put into practice the preventive system I had been studying.

If you could go back, would you make the same choices again?

Yes, I would make them again. Perhaps today, being a few years older, I would approach several things differently. But the choice to offer myself to God and to remain with Him, through Don Bosco, for young people, I would always make that again. I have never had any regrets about being a Salesian. I feel happy and fulfilled in this vocation.

How do you deal with difficult situations, such as young people drifting away from the faith or the Church?

In Nigeria, the challenge presents itself in different forms compared to Europe or America. There are some young people who drift away from the faith and the Church, saying they want to return to the religion of their ancestors, to traditional religion; but it is still a minority. We have many young people with a solid faith, who love the life of the Christian community.

The challenge, if anything, concerns us who are their faith educators. We must think of proposals and activities capable of keeping that faith alive. We are asked to be creative, and above all available, because there are so many young people asking to be accompanied.

Is there any experience you lived with young people you would like to share?

There are many. The one with the young people in Sierra Leone, where I worked immediately after my ordination, sticks in my mind. I was touched by their dedication. Even when we didn't have the money to feed them during the programmes, many made enormous sacrifices, on their own initiative. They had understood the mission and had fully integrated themselves into it. We organised awareness-raising meetings in many schools and they animated everything, without asking for anything in return. Their generosity truly inspired me.

What place does prayer have in your day?

For me, prayer is like the air I breathe; without it, I cannot stand. I take practically everything to God. It is the only ground on which I accept no compromises. And today I need it more than before, because of the responsibility I have been entrusted with: 173 confreres and 19 Salesian houses in two Countries, Nigeria and Niger.

How would you describe Salesian spirituality in a few words?

Joyful and simple. This, I believe, is what makes it attractive to young people.

What are the great challenges of evangelisation and mission today?

For me, it is helping people to give their hearts to God alone. There are so many distractions, and many hearts struggle to stay warm; they become distracted from the things of God.

What could be done more, and better?

Continue to pray, and live a life of witness. Words alone are no longer enough: people need to see us living the Gospel.

Do you collaborate with lay people, with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and with other groups of the Salesian Family?

Certainly. The Salesian mission is bigger than just one person or one group: Don Bosco knew this well, and that is why he invited so many to join him. Once a year, we have a gathering that brings together all the members of the Salesian Family. We share our missions; we listen to each other, and we plan the future together. Everyone is part of the mission, including our drivers, caretakers, and cooks.

What advice would you give to a young person questioning themselves about a religious or priestly vocation?

To keep their heart open to God. To stay in the environment and among the people of God. And to learn silence and meditation; it will help them understand what God is saying to them.

What is the message you would like to convey to today's young people?

To stay focused in life. To make God their friend. To be generous with their lives and with what they have, instead of turning in on themselves.