

Media questionnaire and brief biography: Jean Kouacou

Your age and also your original home village, town or city (i.e. the place you grew up):

Answer: I am 49 years old from Abidjan, the economical capital of Cote d'Ivoire where I grew up before moving to Morecambe 20 years ago.

The church and location in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: I am serving my curacy title at St Paul's Parish Church, Adlington in Chorley's deanery.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I am Married to Isabelle, and we have two children; Elizabeth (19 years old) and Kyran (16 years old) and a stepdaughter: Delphine.

If applicable, what was your former job before entering ministry?

Answer: I had many jobs since moving to England the latest before ministry was in the healthcare industry as a carer and support worker.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: I felt the call to priesthood when I was in Cote d'Ivoire but tried to ignore it until I Joined the serving team (sacristy team) at St Barnabas in Morecambe. And then the voice became louder and louder through people telling me to explore the vocation to the priesthood, but I was afraid as I was trying to understand what it meant in the place where I was (here in England). Then during a pilgrimage at the Shrine of our Lady of Walsingham as I was praying for courage, I got reassured by our Lady and my vicar and said 'yes'. It has been a long and worthy journey of testing, affirmation, confirmation and formation not only for me but my whole family.

What has been a) the most important thing you have learned and b) the most inspiring thing you have experienced during your training? (They can be different!)

Answer for a: an important thing that I have learnt is that God is always at work (*missio dei*) in the world so I have to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit through prayers and reading scriptures so that I will recognise God's work and join in.

Answer for b: the most inspiring thing for me is related to Acts 2.42-47 which describes the first Christian community and is at the base of the diocesan vision; to grow a healthy church through fellowship, discipleship, worship, caring and proclaiming the good news (Gospel) in our community.

Since the pandemic many more parishes have also embraced online opportunities to engage with their local communities alongside their existing services. Please indicate ways in which you may have done this already or what plans you may have to explore ways to reach people in the 'digital space' in the future ...

Answer:

The pandemic has revealed to us our dependence on one another and mostly on God our creator and we thank Him for the technology which allowed us to keep contact with one another. But going forward our church is offering opportunity for the community to get together care for one another by sharing the love of Christ through our daily Mass, the Beehive, coffee morning, parish brunch and other missionary activities.

What are some of the personal challenges and opportunities you face in your ministry in the coming year?

Answer:

My personal challenge this coming year will be to consolidate our enquirers' course (Alpha) to make disciples for Christ and to start a new congregation for families and young people through the opportunities of working with the schools especially our church school, and also youth group like scouts and guides.

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement? (This may be connected to your ordination training of course or it could be something else from another aspect of your life.)

Answer:

I have to say my ability now to fully trust God in everything and to let him be in control of everything as he shapes and equips me to be more Christ-like.

Bishop Philip has said: *"I am committed to continuing the growth of the church in Lancashire, helping to build joyful Christian communities. I would love to see the Church of England in Lancashire being an ever-stronger voice for justice, especially for the poorest. And I believe children and young people need to be at the very heart of all that we do."*

How will you seek to support the Bishop in fulfilling these aims?

Answer:

I have had the opportunity to work with young people in the diocese and I am aware of the importance of having young people's voices heard in our churches to transform our communities. Therefore, I will support the bishop by creating opportunities for our children and young people; encouraging them to join the diocesan youth forum, by working with schools and uniform groups, discipling them and involving them to the life of the church.

Finally, when you get the chance, what do you do you chill out and relax?

Answer:

To relax and chill out I like to visit new places, walk in nature and cook.