

## OBJECTIVE

To recall, on weekly basis, some thoughts, sayings of the Servant of God Bishop Joseph Marie Melchior de Marion Brésillac, Founder of the Society of African Missions (SMA), the Venerable Fr. Augustin Planque, First Superior General of the SMA, the first generations of SMA missionaries and significant events in the history of the Society.



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# Retrospect

## A DATE IN THE HISTORY OF THE SMA IN NIGERIA

### First Eucharistic Celebration in Lagos in Modern Era

On Sunday, 9th March 2025, we celebrate the 163rd anniversary of the first official celebration of the Holy Eucharist in Lagos. Here's a brief history of this significant event, extracted from the homily delivered by Very Rev. Fr. Eddie Harthnett, SMA, during a thanksgiving Mass commemorating the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the SMA. The Mass took place at St. Leo's Catholic Church, Ikeja, Lagos, in March 2013.

*".... Francesco Borghero SMA, arrived in Lagos on 8 March 1862 and celebrated the First Mass in Lagos the following day. "He was the first SMA Missionary to arrive in Nigeria although Rev. Fr. Irene Laffitte SMA, made a stopover in Lagos as a visitor on his way to Ouidah in September 1861. The visit of Fr. Borghero SMA was a planned Missionary Breakthrough [...]"*

*Fr. Francesco Borghero SMA celebrated the 1<sup>st</sup> Holy Mass in Lagos Island on 9 March 1862 in a house belonging to the Carrena family, who were Italian like Fr. Borghero. A journalist captain, Richard Burton writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century says that the "the Carrena House was one of the Finest in Lagos, fronting the water, near the Wesleyan Mission House, then the Wesleyan Chapel ... .. then the Church Mission House". This description locates the place of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mass on Lagos Island, where the Cathedral Parish of Holy Cross stands today. The First Mass was not celebrated in the area of Eleggata as some people mentioned. Eleggata did not feature for a number of years later [.....]"*

*Fr Borghero celebrated the first Mass in Badagry on 2 October 1863 and first Mass in Epe on 17 April 1864. The first Mass in Abeokuta was celebrated on 15 May 1864..."*

Note: The full text of the homily is available at SMA Irish Province website: sma.ie



Fr. Francesco Borghero



Very Rev. Eddie Harthnett