

Historical Record

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The Historical sketch of the Knights of Marshall

The Noble Order of the “Knights of Marshall” is a historical society founded on the lines of the Order of the “Knights of Columbus” of the United States of America. It is a Catholic Fraternal Organisation in West Africa and England with its Supreme Headquarters at Sekondi, Ghana.

In the year 1925, some enthusiastic young men of St Paul's Catholic Church, Sekondi, rallied themselves together to plan the formation of a purely Catholic Friendly Society in West Africa for the purpose of bringing together Catholic men for effective lay apostolate and Catholic Action, and also provide a friendly social forum for Catholic men who might otherwise be attracted into non-catholic secret societies. The original name of the Society was “ASSOCIATION OF CHARITY”

These ardent young men made enquiries as regards the history of the “Knights of Columbus”. They found that whilst the “Knights of Columbus” exists as a fraternal organization, it also immortalizes the name of a layman, Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of America. Inspired by a similar spirit, this band of Catholic young men, with their zealous leaders: Brothers J. Brookman-Amissah and J.A. Kwesi-Aaba, decided to institute a fraternal society that would immortalize the memory of Sir James Marshall, who acting on the West African scene, championed and espoused the refounding of the Catholic Church in the Gold Coast (Ghana), West Africa in the year 1880 after nearly 250 years of the breakdown (1637) of the first Catholic Church established by the Portuguese in 1482.

Their researches into the history of the Catholic church in West Africa revealed that Sir James Marshall M.A., B.L., C.M.G., K.C.S.G., a Scotsman and a Catholic layman, while working in the British Colonial Service in Lagos (Nigeria) and the Gold Coast (Ghana), most persistently added his voice and the weight of this endeavours to the appeals and pressures that made Propaganda Fide assign the Gold Coast to the Society of African Mission (SMA). Following the assignment, the S.M.A. transferred the pioneer Priests Rev. Fathers Auguste Moreau and Eugene Murat, both French nationals, from the Island of St. Helene station (South Africa Mission), to establish the Catholic Mission in the Gold Coast (Ghana) at Elmina.

Sir James Marshall was, for some time, a Chief Magistrate and Judicial Assessor at Cape Coast, Gold Coast (Ghana), Puisne Judge at Lagos (Nigeria) and finally Chief Justice of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, resident at Accra, Gold Coast.

The pioneer Priest arrived at Elmina, Gold Coast (Ghana) on 18th May, 1880 just before Sir James Marshall was transferred from Lagos to Accra as Chief Justice. He gave the Priests every encouragement and assistance in establishing themselves and the faith at Elmina.

Sir James Marshall was also known to have played a significant role in enhancing the growth of the Catholic Church in Lagos and was involved in the preparatory work that led to the establishment of the Catholic Church at Asaba, Southern Nigeria which actually occurred in 1888, long after his retirement. It was to immortalize the name of such a great soul that the founders named the Society after Sir James Marshall, hence the “Knights of Marshall”.

Consecration of First Council (Foundation)

When all local formalities had gone through and after contact had been made with the Knights of Columbus, the first “Council” of the Knights of Marshall was opened (consecrated) at Sekondi on 18th November, 1926 with an instrument of Charter granted and signed by Rt. Rev. Ernest Hauger, Vicar Apostolic of the Gold Coast (Ghana), resident at Cape Coast. The first “Grand Knight” was Bro. J.

Brookman-Amissah and “Deputy Grand Knights” Bro. J.A. Kwesi-Aaba, the designations of the offices fashioned after those of the Knights of Columbus of the United States of America.

Ecclesiastical Approval of Constitution and Laws; 1929

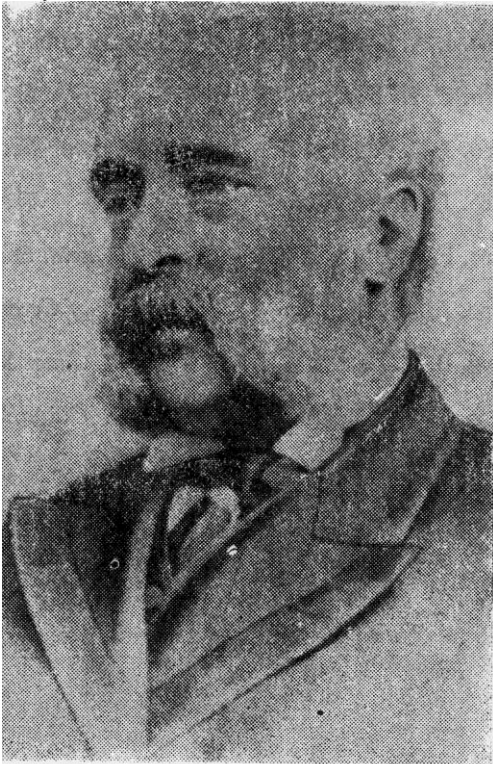
Having well established the first Council, the Founders sought from Bishop Hauger, formal approval to work and extend the Knights of Marshall as a Catholic Fraternal Society.

Approval was given on 1st May, 1929, the date on which the Bishop signed the Society's Constitution and Laws.

Extension

These few facts are given to throw light on the foundation of the Society of the Knights of Marshall which now has many branches as a Catholic Fraternal Organisation in West Africa and England.

All generations of the Noble Order will forever remain grateful to the Founding Fathers for their foresight and efforts in establishing within the Catholic Church a truly fraternal society which is bringing Catholic men of West Africa and elsewhere closer together in the practice of unity, brotherhood and service to the Holy Mother the Catholic Church.



Sir James Marshall
M.A., B.L., C.M.G., K.C.S.G.

Conclusion

We cannot close this historical account without reminding all who read it and especially all Brothers of the Noble Order that a man of piety, with cultivated mind, with a fund of ready knowledge, with manners and habits that make him welcome wherever he goes and the kind of influence which cultivation always gives, can do much for the good of mankind, for the honour and glory of God and for his own future peace, by the way and manner, in which he makes use of his God-given attributes properly developed by means of love and service.