

## December 9, 2009 - Vatican – The vicariate apostolic of Gambella



**(ANS –Vatican City)** – On December 5 Pope Benedict XVI raised the prefecture apostolic of Gambella, Ethiopia, to a vicariate apostolic, with the same name and covering the same territory. The Holy Father appointed as the first vicar apostolic Fr. Angelo Moreschi, SDB, the present prefect apostolic of Gambella, and assigned him the titular see of Elefantaria, Mauritania.

Bishop-elect Moreschi, who has been in Ethiopia for over 30 years, was born at Nave in the province of Brescia, Italy, on June 13, 1952. He made his first profession at Albarè on September 1, 1974, and was ordained a priest on October 2, 1982.

On February 25, 2001, he was installed as the first prefect apostolic of Gambella.

The prefecture apostolic of Gambella, entrusted to the Salesians, was established on November 25, 2000, following the division of the prefecture apostolic of Jimma-Bonga. It covers an area of 19,300 square miles (somewhat smaller than West Virginia) and has a population of 507,000. There are 8,430 Catholics in the prefecture, which has 8 parishes, 10 diocesan priests, 4 religious priests, 9 women religious, and 6 seminarians.

From the beginning the Salesians have opened new parishes and started several projects. Among these are the building of a vocational training school and some agrarian projects. The arrival of three Italian doctors made it possible to open a health clinic at Abwobo. Given the vitality of their educational and social work in some regions, such as Jur, Gog, and Abwobo, the stable establishment of the Catholic Church was called for.