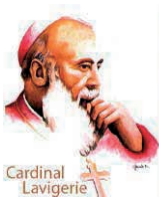


MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)



Forward in the Spirit

Issue No. 433 2017



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Editor's Word.

In 1517, five hundred years ago, the Reformation began with Martin Luther calling out loudly for a reform of the Church. Lots of things needed looking at. Unfortunately, calls for necessary change met with human frailty and sinfulness on both sides of the argument, resulting in divisions and destruction, as well as some healthy reforms. The Church is called to continual renewal and repentance,



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

always coming back to the call of Jesus Christ who said, "Come follow me!" This is true for the whole Church and for the different groups and individuals who



Brussels meeting

together make up the body of Christ.

Last year, 2016, the Missionaries of Africa met for their Chapter as they do every 6 years. We looked at our Society as it is today and asked during so many meetings "What does God want of us today?"

Now all the meetings are over and we have a plan for the future. We are called to continue to proclaim the Good News

with Hope. The Provinces of Europe and America, having welcomed back many confreres into retirement from the missions, are now also welcoming younger confreres from all over the Society to set up, continue, or to expand parishes and centres in these older Provinces. There is no question of the mission retiring or fading away. In Germany there are two centres for welcoming migrants and helping them settle in. In Italy we are helping migrants learn Italian and working with other congregations in Sicily to help those who have crossed the Mediterranean. In Spain we have a house helping Africans who have arrived there. In France, in addition to the outreach to North Africans in Marseilles, we now have a parish reaching out in Toulouse to other Africans in France. In Switzerland and Belgium there are initiatives from the Missionaries of Africa and now in UK, for the first time in many, many years we are hoping to staff a parish (in the North of England) with a particular concern for Africans and Muslims.



Cologne meeting

We are no longer simply winding down. We are reaching out. We are no longer withdrawing into our national groups, we are taking on initiatives in evangelisation as the multicultural and multi-ethnic Society that Cardinal Lavigerie envisaged 150 years ago in North Africa.

In the Magazine during this year, I hope to show some of these initiatives, the new confreres and the fresh spirit which drives them. It is the same Spirit which led the first caravans to Timbuktu and the Fires of Namugongo, the Uganda Martyrs. We are frail human beings but Christ calls us to renewal and growth.

Visit to Jerusalem

In June 2016, I visited our community in Jerusalem, invited by Cletus Atindaana, a Ghanaian Missionary of Africa student, who was to be ordained deacon there, together with David Elweu from Uganda, and Herve Tougma from Burkina Faso.



Cletus' diaconate at St Anne's

They live, pray and work in community in St Anne's. This is an unusual community in many ways.

There are 12 students from all over Africa studying by day at Ratisbon, the Salesian Institute, to be Missionaries, but living as one community with a further 16 fully-professed White Father priests and brothers, (and one archbishop), each with his own task. They are not students and staff, but Missionaries of Africa, witnessing to, and praying for, the Mission in Africa.

St Anne's Basilica is reputed to be the birthplace of Mary and as well as the basilica from the time of the Crusades (taken by Saladin), there are the remains of an enor-



St Anne's entrance

mous Byzantine church. On the same grounds there are the excavations of the Pool mentioned in John's Gospel where Jesus healed a paralytic who had been waiting for years without hope. This pool also supplied water for the Temple, which was only a short distance away (now the site of the Dome of the Rock – sacred to Muslims and Jews).

The White Fathers' compound of St Anne's is an anomaly in a city of anomalies. It is situated in the old city, East Jerusalem just inside St. Stephen's Gate near the start of the Via Dolorosa, where Christians begin the Way of the Cross every Friday, and Muslims arrive for their Friday prayers, and a short distance away Jews prepare for the Sabbath.



St Annes interior

When all the Eastern Mediterranean lands were ruled by the Ottoman Caliph in Istanbul, the British and French sided with him in the Crimean War against Russia. To thank them, the Caliph gave certain holy sites in Jerusalem to France. Eventually, France entrusted some of these sites to Cardinal Lavigerie and the White Fathers. Lavigerie accepted St Anne's as a place where his Missionaries would pray for the Mission in Africa and educate local students to be priests in the Melkite Rite.

In 1967 the army of Israel conquered the West Bank of the Jordan including East Jerusalem. From then on the young Arab students could no longer come to be trained for the priesthood. Con-

quered by Israel, the West Bank is not internationally recognised as Israeli territory, although Israel claims it and administers it. So part of the White Fathers' compound comes under Israel but part is French territory since the gift from the Caliph is still legally binding.

Part of our building in St. Anne's and our cemetery on the Mount of Olives come under the French Tricolor, whilst the Star of David is all around.



Grotto of the Virgin's Birth

Lots of visitors come to our house, pilgrims, sightseers, Christians, Muslims and Jews. They are greeted and shown around by the confreres and students. And find an oasis of peace in the bustle of the Old City.



Pater Noster church from Mt of Olives

Over the years groups of African priests and religious have been welcomed to follow Bible and Spirituality courses, an academic review on the Near East has been published, a small museum is being set up and outreach to the different Christian Churches, Jews and Muslims is maintained.

Fr. Michael Heap, MAfr.



Easter in Jerusalem

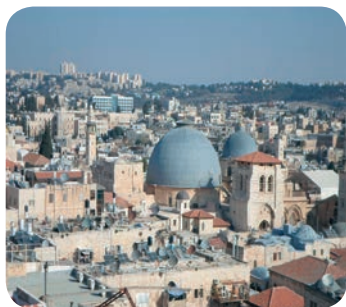
My name is Cletus, from a fishing village in Northern Ghana and now a deacon and a Missionary of Africa. I studied in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Congo, but then, 4 years ago, I was appointed to study Theology in Jerusalem. What a surprise! What a privilege!



Cletus with Palestinian friend in Jerusalem

Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from every corner of the world pour in. The streets of Jerusalem are never empty of visitors. Candles never cease to burn in the churches and holy shrines. At the sound of the shofar (ram's horn), Jews hurry to the synagogues and as soon as the Muezzin calls the azan (call to prayer), Muslims fill the mosques. On this mountain of the Lord, the three Abrahamic religions meet. People from all walks of life, all cultures, the world meets in Jerusalem.

Imagine, learning to speak of God in the very land in which Jesus lived and revealed the Father! I still get a thrill when a biblical passage is read and I am in the very place where that particular biblical story took place. The Gospel passages of the annunciation to Mary in Nazareth or the transfiguration of the Lord on mount Tabor or the agony of the Lord in the garden of Gethsemane or the Crucifixion of Jesus on Calvary or the healing of the paralytic in the pool of Bethesda (which I can see just outside my window). On Calvary, in the Holy Sepulchre, hearing the resurrection narratives while touching the empty tomb is certainly more vivid than in my native village or when I hear about it at the university.



Church of Holy Sepulchre

At the same time I am bewildered as I watch the drama of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unfold.

On Christmas Eve, we attend mass in the Nativity Church in Bethlehem. On Palm Sunday every year we start with the long procession from Bethphage behind the Mt of Olives, and end in the White Fathers' compound in St Anne's Basilica in the Old City. As the Patriarch of Jerusalem gives

a short message and a solemn blessing, Christians pray, sing, dance



Cletus and a Good Samaritan

and although a minority, they make themselves heard in Jerusalem.

For Christians Easter is the high point of the year.

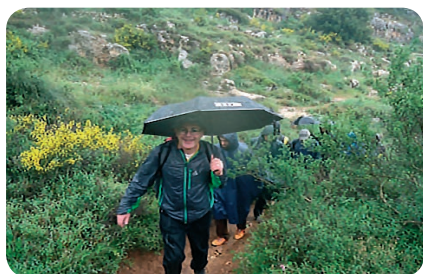
The Easter Triduum is celebrated solemnly in our Christian religious communities and parishes, with the Holy Sepulchre as the focus. My own community begins the

solemn Mass of Holy Thursday with the community of St Peter in Gallicantu (where Peter denied Christ thrice in the High Priest's courtyard) near the Upper Room on Mt Zion. After Mass, we silently walk down the Kidron valley and up to the Garden of Gethsemane, joining the Franciscans and other Christians to relive Christ's prediction of Peter's denial, the flight of his disciples, his agony in the garden and his arrest. On Good Friday, we gather in the Holy Sepulchre for the Lord's Passion or at the Lithostrotos where he was condemned to death. On Holy Saturday, we, Missionaries and our friends, are in St Anne's Basilica for the Easter Vigil Mass, joyfully singing at the top of our voices. With the special echo in the St Anne's Basilica our voices resound and fill the sky.



Praying at tomb of Jesus

Then those who are strong take the eight-hour walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus. I made this journey too. Like Cleopas and his fellow disciple in the Gospel who had heavy hearts, walking and discussing their disappointment at the recent events of Christ death, I too had burning feet and contemplated the events of Good Friday. This year we were lashed by rain and wind for more than half of the journey. Most of us were discouraged and our hopes were dimmed. But, at



On the road to Emmaus

the breaking of bread, as we celebrated Mass, the blessing was the same; we too had our eyes opened and our hearts warmed. We returned to Jerusalem, renewed and ready to testify that the Lord Jesus is alive and in our midst!

Cletus Atindaana, MAfr

Richard Kinlen, MAfr.

Fr. Richard (Dick) Kinlen died in Brussels on November 16th 2016 aged 68. He knew from the age of seven or eight, when he first met the White Fathers at a Vocation's Exhibition in Newcastle that his future lay with them in Africa. He regularly received their newsletters and then in 1959, at the age of eleven, he entered the White Father's Junior Seminary at St Boswells in the Scottish Borders. Secondary studies at The Priory, Bishop's Waltham, Philosophy in Ireland, Novitiate in Dorking, and Theology in Canada, succeeded one another. Finally, on 25th May 1974, with his parents and his brothers Robert and Martin present, he was ordained priest in his native South Shields.

He was appointed to Zaire (now the Congo). After a three-month language course, he began work in one of the several parishes he was to serve in over the next eleven years. Conditions were not easy. Travel was arduous, with long journeys at weekends, celebrating Mass and the sacraments in remote villages. Yet Richard was happy and his letters home were full of interesting stories, with descriptions of people, their lives and the country. Often with Belgian White Fathers in community, and with his interest in languages, he acquired a smattering of Flemish. This came in useful later. Involved in teaching R.E. in local secondary schools, he particularly enjoyed contact with young people.

In 1986 he was recalled to work in Scotland (Ratho) promoting vocations and mission awareness. After years in the Borders and with a Scottish mother, he felt completely at home. One day a confrère borrowed Richard's car and searched for something to listen to. All he could find were tapes on "Teach Yourself Japanese"! His interest in languages had not diminished!

On his return to Zaire in 1989 he had to learn yet another



Fr. Dick Kinlen



language. He went to work in Lubumbashi, where he was both moved and upset by the desperate poverty of so many people. If life had been hard in the rural areas, it was much harder in the anonymity of this large city.

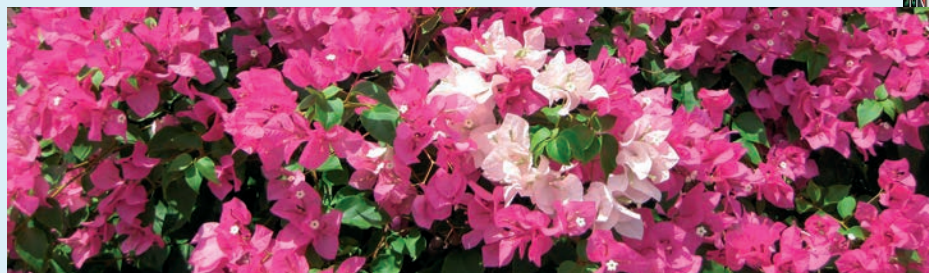
Richard needed a good rest and a change of pace, so he was appointed back to London as bursar in different communities, then as Provincial Secretary. Computer-literate, he was ideally suited and he gave five years of faithful service. By 2003, again ready for parish ministry, he served in Lancaster, Preston and Fleetwood. His African experiences made him a great storyteller and he was much appreciated everywhere.

In 2012, the European Province needed a full time Secretary in Brussels. Richard accepted the challenge. For the next four years he attended meetings all over Europe with the Provincial. Demanding work, but much to his delight, he became involved with the African community in Brussels, some of whom were refugees from Zaire.

Late in 2015 he became ill, eventually being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Choosing to remain in Brussels, he was cared for in a hospital close to the White Father community until his death. As well as the White Fathers and his family, many Congolese were present at his funeral, providing the beautiful singing and music, and witnessing to the help and support he had given them.

He lies now in the White Father cemetery at Varsenare.

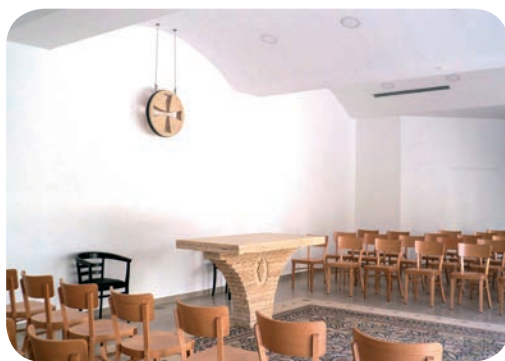
May he rest in peace.



The Jubilee Mass

for Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr.

The Jubilee Mass for Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, MAfr. (25 years a bishop) was celebrated in the Pilgrim Welcome Centre at St. Anne's in Jerusalem, which had been formally inaugurated on 21 November, the feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple.



Pilgrim Centre Chapel

Among the concelebrants were Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto, Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem, and Bishop Peter Burcher, former bishop of Reykjavik. Also present at the celebration was Mgr Joseph-Jules Zerey, Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem of the Melkites. Before the final blessing Mgr Zerey, as a former student of St Anne's Seminary and Melkite bishop in Cairo when Mgr Fitzgerald was Nuncio there, offered a few words of congratulations to the jubilarian.

The liturgical celebration was followed by a fraternal meal provided by the Sisters of the Spiritual Family of The Work, who take care of the catering at St Anne's.



Pilgrim Centre

Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald has been a missionary in East Africa, Sudan, in Rome and was the Papal Nuncio to the Arab League in Cairo. He resides now in community in Jerusalem. This is the text of his homily at the Mass.

Epiphany 2017

Homily of Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald

The Epiphany is a missionary feast. As the Letter to the Ephesians says: it is part of the mystery of Christ, the mystery of the Incarnate Word that we have been celebrating during these Christmas feasts, that the Nations share in the promise of the Gospel, in the promise of salvation. The Magi who have come to adore the new-born King of the Universe are the first-fruits of these Nations which have come to recognize their Saviour. The Magi saw a sign in the heavens, a sign which was not always as bright as they would have wished, but which nevertheless led them to undertake and complete a long and arduous journey.

Having achieved their goal, the Magi showed themselves to be as simple as doves, and at the same time as wise as serpents. Humbly they fell down in adoration before this Child but, without informing Herod of what they had found, they returned to their own countries by a different way. After their encounter with the Child and the Child's parents they went home changed for, as



Archbishop Michael receives a 25th anniversary gift

the poet has said, they were no longer at ease in the old dispensation.

It was the custom of Saint Pope John Paul II to mark the Feast of the Epiphany by ordaining bishops of different nationalities. He considered these bishops to be like the Magi, men who had been



guided by the star of their vocation, men coming from different countries and different backgrounds, but all belonging to the one community of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

So it came about that 25 years ago eleven of us, of eight different nationalities, received episcopal ordination at the hands of Pope John Paul II. Five had been directly appointed in charge of a Local Church, one became the Abbot of the territorial Abbey of Saint Maurice in Switzerland, two were appointed auxiliary bishops, one in a diocese and one in the armed forces, three were in the service of the Holy See, one of whom was Mgr Rino Passigato, appointed Apostolic Nuncio in Burundi.

Of these eleven, five have already completed their journey following the star and have entered into the house of the Father. I would like to mention in particular Mgr Benjamin de Jesus, of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Vicar Apostolic of Jolo in the Philippines, who was brutally assassinated not far from his cathedral. He can surely be numbered among the Martyrs.

Six of us remain, continuing on our way. Two are residential bishops in Africa, in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, and in Inongo in the RDC. Mgr Passigato is currently Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal. Three of us, including myself, are retired.

On the occasion of this Jubilee, I would like to beg your prayers that we may never lose sight of this star that has guided us, and that we may always remain humble adorers of this King who himself came among us in such a humble way and who so generously offers a share in his Kingdom.

To Him be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Archbishop Michael FitzGerald, MAfr

A worthless servant in Algeria.

My name is Vincent Somboro. I am a Malian, a dogon from the Diocese of Mopti, right in the centre of West Africa, and I am preparing to be a Missionary of Africa. After studying Philosophy for 3 years in Burkina Faso, then completing my novitiate year

in Zambia, I was appointed to a community of Missionaries of Africa in Ghardaia, Algeria, for a two year lived-experience of Mission. I have been here for one year now.

Algeria is a Muslim country and religion is absolutely central to its daily life. I count myself very lucky to be working amongst a people for whom God and religion are still so important.

As Christians here, our life is one of discreet dialogue. It can happen that I talk with certain people about religion, but this would only be with people who want to convert me to Islam. I build my life as a Christian on Our Lord's words, « whatever you do to one of these little ones, you do to me!



Vincent and his Mozabite friends



Taize celebration in Tlemcen

» and still I remain « a worthless servant who is only doing his duty ».

I live this life in different places. In a library; in a centre for handicapped children; in meeting migrants and anyone else the Lord puts in my path. In the library: as well as being the librarian in charge of books, I give extra help to both children and adults who are learning English or French. It is really the only place where I can meet Algerians: coming into contact with Algerian society in a more informal way.

Once a week I play sports with the children in a centre for the handicapped. This simple interaction, being with the children, with no agenda other than being there with them, brings me great pleasure.

Being a Malian, an African, is also a great advantage when it comes to contact with migrants. Meeting migrants affords me a marvellous opportunity to serve my African brothers and sisters. This is a challenge which

preoccupies me greatly, and it is doubly useful: in the context of Algeria, I am able to be both a missionary and a prophet.

I am a missionary because the migrants really feel at home when they come to our house. A confrere and I, between us, speak Moore, Hausa and Bambara. This covers most of West Africa. As fellow Africans, we are living the same reality in Algeria as they are.

I am a prophet because, as an African, I yearn for our home countries to come up with structures to

help our young people, helping them struggle against famine and war, and against the desire driving our youth to get to Europe no matter the cost. I feel troubled and challenged when I see young people crossing deserts to get to Algeria, hoping to cross the seas to Italy and Spain. I see the religious and cultural divides, the injustice and the racism that they encounter. I thank God for my experience here.

Vincent Somboro.



Vincent amongst the sand dunes



The Church in Algeria has many faces

Vocation Promotion then...

*Because our needs change, our house in Sutton Coldfield is to be sold. During World War 2 it served as a novitiate and residence for missionaries who couldn't go overseas at the time. Later it became a centre for Promotion and Mission Appeals. **Fr. Richard Calcutt, MAfr** recalls his time there.*



Fr. Richard Calcutt

I arrived in Sutton Coldfield in 1963, after theological studies in Carthage, Tunisia. I was the only one in our year to be appointed back to his own country, instead of going directly to Africa. After Ordination to the Priesthood in Whetstone, North London, I had a few weeks holiday at home, during which I had to learn to drive, as this would be needed for Missionary Promotion work in Sutton Coldfield. Towards the end of my holiday I was sent to make a Missionary Appeal in Manchester, but my driving test was in Sidcup on the Monday morning! I dashed back overnight to London, then



Sutton Coldfield house front

Sidcup, passed my test and telephoned the results to Sutton.

Soon afterwards, I said goodbye to my home and travelled up to Sutton where Father Joseph Brankin was the Superior. He explained to me that I would spend each week travelling around the country in designated dioceses, speaking in schools about life in the Missions and giving film shows. On Sundays I was to make missionary appeals in parishes and then on Monday back to the schools. Every three weeks, back in Sutton we reported on how things were going. Being newly ordained, I found it a punishing schedule. Luckily, we had Father Alfred Howell, an elderly White Father, who kept a "fatherly" eye on us, young priests, so often alone on the road.

December was the most difficult time of the year. We had to try to persuade parish priests to allow an appeal in their church the following year. In those days before mobile phones, it meant looking for a telephone box in the freezing weather and snow, then telephoning back to Sutton giving the dates of the appeals we had managed to book. Most parish priests understood we were doing a difficult job and received us with kindness.

During the school summer holidays, a series of "Voc Vacs" (Vocation Holidays) were organised in Sutton for young people interested in a possible missionary vocation. Initially, these were to look for pupils for our two Junior Seminaries (St. Boswells, Scotland, and The Priory, England). The boys slept in converted offices, and during the day were given slide-shows and talks about Africa, went on outings, played games in the back garden, etc.

During this first time in Sutton we organised our stand for the National Vocations Exhibition at Earls Court Exhibition Centre in London. We built the stand in our garage at Sutton and took it down to London in a hired lorry. For a week, we were "on show" to large groups of school children all day and adults in the evenings. Since the Royal Tournament was due to open at Earls Court after us, the authorities wanted us "out" quickly. We spent the entire last night dismantling the stand, then taking it back to our house in Totteridge for safe-keeping.

At last! In 1965 I was appointed to Africa (Ghana) but after too short a time, I was back in Sutton Coldfield!

During my years away in Africa, there had been changes. No more Junior Seminaries and less individual school visiting. Now we had “Vocation Weeks”. Teams of priests, brothers and sisters



Sutton Coldfield house from the back

from various religious orders would set up an exhibition in a secondary school for a week at a time, give talks in the various classes and organise liturgies. This seemed to me to be a much more real “ministry”. And even back in Sutton, with Fathers Tom Conway and Alan Thompson, the atmosphere was much more relaxed.

Missionary Appeals could now be arranged by telephone. In addition to vocation and appeal work, I took over as Editor of the Magazine – first in Sutton, then later in London. All this meant a great deal of office work. Thank God for the various secretaries who came into the house daily, and dealt with the mountain of mail. Donations, requests for prayers, Mass Offerings, results of Missionary Appeals - all received in the office and all answered personally - even during St. Anthony’s Novena and the Christmas Appeal when the office work increased a hundredfold!

Many British Missionaries of Africa have served on the staff at Sutton Coldfield throughout the years – years of service involving sacrificing time they would have preferred spending in Africa. A little prayer I came across the other day, sums it all up:

“Loving Father, help us to accept the life you have prepared for us, with its difficulties and its mysterious joys”.

Fr. Richard Calcutt, MAfr

Vocation Promotion Now.

I am Fidelis Damana, a young Ghanaian Missionary of Africa in Tanzania, and a Vocation Director. It is an adventure. I drive into unknown villages, meeting unknown people, along unknown roads. Going out well dressed and coming back covered in dust, but always happy to meet young people ready and full of enthusiasm to get involved in the missionary work of evangelization. I “Hunt for the Future”.

But are people still interested in missionary or religious life? Does it touch the hearts of modern youth?

I see my missionary work as like that of a fisherman, in three parts:

1 Casting the net,

I know about fishing from home. Casting the net, we trust in ourselves and in God. At times you throw the net with conviction but no results. At times you throw the net and it is amazing what you catch.

As a vocation director, I throw my nets with conviction and trust in God. I visit schools, talking to young people about the joy of being a Missionary of Africa. I accompany young



Fidelis and families of students

people as they discern their vocations in life. I explain, encourage, propose and journey with them so that they can freely respond and choose.

I share with them my own personal experience. Questions I ask are: What are you called to do in life? Do you believe in commitment?

Some ask: How do we know that God is actually the one calling? Can't we serve God at home? Why a permanent commitment in life?

Some are interested in joining us. Others not.



Fidelis and future missionaries?

2 Selecting.

Those who are interested and feel God is calling them, are encouraged to write a letter of application. My God! The number of letters I receive! Brown envelopes, white envelopes, no envelope at all. I read the letters and reply with joy. The content is always very serious and spiritual. I smile because it reminds me of what we wrote in our time. Naïve, yet sincere. I see myself in the person writing.

Then a painful task! Choosing the ones who might fit into our way of life. Who knows what can happen in 11 years of formation?

3 Following up

If the Society accepts these candidates, I visit the families, and invite them to participate in the formation of their sons. They always ask, "What will our son get from the Missionaries of Africa?" One man asked if his son would be paid more than the salary of a lawyer? I told them there is no

National Catholic Counselling Centre, Ghana.

In 1996, at the request of the Superior General, I was asked to study counselling with a particular job in mind, and in May 2005 I set off to found the National Catholic Counselling Centre in Kumasi, Ghana, under the auspices of the Ghana Bishops' Conference.

There were pros and cons!

I knew no Ghanaian language, I had nowhere to live, the American sisters and the Irish Holy Ghost Father who had tried to set something up, had all gone away (USA or Vietnam), there was hardly any money, I had only practised individual or couples counselling whereas here the Church wanted group sessions...

The bishops were very welcoming. The Archbishop of Kumasi had set aside a large piece of land for the Centre. The Major Religious Superiors were very supportive. Ghanaians I met were welcoming, everyone was welcoming but there was no money!

In the end, I went to live in the White Fathers' compound near the Spiritan College where our students studied. Since there was only one other priest, I helped with Masses and spiritual direction. Every day I would go down to a centre run by American sisters and British White Father, Mike Targett. I was given the use of an office and occasionally helped out with Mass and the odd session.

The road to this centre from where I was staying was under construction and it could take me two hours or more to travel the 16 miles.



Foundations of NCCC



In the meantime, no money! However the religious superiors and bishops had sent a Ghanaian sister, Sr Martha Anobaah, SMMC, to USA to study counselling and at the end of 2005/ beginning of 2006 she also came back qualified to work.

It was not an easy task. There are real differences between counselling in UK or USA and in Africa



NCCC nearly finished

(Ghana). I was taught to be mainly non-directive, letting the client speak, and eventually find their own way forward with encouragement from me. In Ghana I found that people expected more participation from me. Simply sitting and looking empathic

and soulful cut no ice in Ghana (it was too hot?). People came with problems and they expected me to solve them!

Slowly I came to compromise, or at least adapt. I would listen, before suggesting how I might possibly feel in their situation. If the person recognised the feeling, then we would continue to the next feeling/experience. It was exhausting.

People certainly had feelings and experiences but it was not really part of the cultures to dwell on them, and so recognising/naming feelings was not easy. Perhaps that is partly why I am asked if Africans need counselling? People there suffer but try to smile and get on with life.

In Ghana I came across all the usual problems of life, as well as the problems associated with a society in transition. Depression, and attempts at dealing with it – drugs, alcohol, denial. Violence, abuse and their consequences, anxieties and fears.

My own anxiety was lack of funding. We gradually found money to get started on the building. Sr Martha left to become Mother General of her congregation and was only replaced after two years by another Ghanaian, Sr Bernadette Honny, SHCJ, (still there).

More travelling, listening, begging and building, then in May 2015 I was called back to UK. The problems are still there. The courage and coping are still there and the building is still only half built because of lack of money.



NCCC mobile

Michael Heap

LESSONS FROM THE POOR

When you give a feast invite the poor, the lame and the blind
and you will be happy.



St Martins

My name is Christopher Njoroge, and I am delighted to share my experience in the communities of Saint Martin and L'Arche Kenya. Saint Martin Catholic Social Apostolate is an organization that seeks to mobilize local com-

munities to support the vulnerable people in their midst. It is located at Nyahuru, a rural town in Kenya, East Africa and works with people with disabilities, street children, people living with HIV/AIDs, alcohol and drug dependent people. From the work of Saint Martin, L'Arche Kenya was born. People with and without intellectual disabilities are brought together in an atmosphere of friendship and trust.

"Only Through Community." Saint Martin embraces a community-based approach. In the gospel of the multiplication of bread, the disciples, overwhelmed, ask Jesus to send the people away. Jesus tells them to share the little they have. This is what we do with the communities that we serve in Nyandarua and Laikipia, Kenya: They share the resources entrusted to them. Resources are available on this Earth but certain people have too much, while others have too little. The problem is greed. Faced with a challenge, we do not offer financial solutions but mobilize the community members for support. The communities together raise money and send children for corrective surgery, pay school fees for HIV orphans, or help alcoholic parents access rehabilitation services.



Washing of the feet at L'Arche

Over 1000 volunteers give their time and resources for the service of needy

people in the communities. These volunteers are drawn from different churches, living ecumenism. Volunteers identify cases in their locality and mobilize the community. Saint Martin offers the formation so that they have the necessary skills and motivation to serve the vulnerable. So our social workers do not directly target the beneficiaries but the volunteers, who in turn reach out to the benefi-



Sharing the gospel in an ecumenical service

ciaries. The little support we get from external funding partners is used to facilitate this process while the bulk of the money going to the beneficiaries comes from the community members. Inspired by Saint Martin of Tours, we live the mystery of Jesus who says, "Invite the poor and you will be happy." Saint Martin of Tours shared his cloak with a

poor beggar and Martin's life was transformed. When we welcome people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDs, street children, those struggling with alcoholism, we believe that this can bring us true happiness, transformation. The poor people can transform us and lead us to Jesus. God has entrusted the most vulnerable with an important mission: helping us grow in love and solidarity. We so often see the poor as a problem and ourselves as the ones who can solve it. We feel generous and good, but we only humiliate those receiving our support. Our experience has taught us that the poor are a sign of hope in our communities. Our country, Kenya, is deeply divided along ethnic and religious lines but here we have people of different ethnic groups coming together to support a child with disabilities. In recent celebrations, members of different churches joined in ecumenical services to celebrate and motivate volunteers. The vulnerable people have healed divisions and fostered solidarity in our communities. Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, visited Saint Martin and said, "The gift of Saint Martin to the world is their witness that each member is precious and that the weakest member taking the central place is transformative for all." In Saint Martin, through service to vulnerable people, I have met Jesus. I serve a God daily in the service of my needy sisters and brothers.

Christopher Njoroge is a Kenyan man who spent several years studying with the Missionaries of Africa. He now serves the poor as a married man with his wife and their two children.

A Counsellor in Africa

For 10 years I was privileged to work for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Ghana. My job was to set up a centre for Counselling in Ghana. I had been a counsellor for 8 years in London, but working in Ghana was naturally different.

Part of my work was helping to train couples, who would then help other married couples in difficulties in their marriages. Since Ghana has many languages the training was done in English.



Couples counselling

Ghanaian couples meet similar challenges to couples anywhere in the world, although some may not be obvious to non-Africans, particularly in cultures where the extended family is less important than in Ghana.

One major problem could be children! If there are no children, or if the babies die very young, it is not a tragedy for the couple alone. The whole extended family is involved. Individuals are part of the larger family for better or worse, so anything going “wrong” for the individual/couple, affects the family. .

Mothers or mothers-in-law then get involved, and can pressure the couple. Divisions are caused. Many would-be grandmothers push for the husband to get rid of a non-productive wife, or at least that he take a second wife who will be fertile (in the villages it is still often considered to be the “fault” of the woman). In Catholic marriages this is very difficult.

If there is “sterility” in either spouse, then sometimes in-laws blame the wife for witchcraft. She has “poisoned” her husband. This is especially possible if she comes from a different tribe or religion. “What can you expect from those people?” This is an attitude which is not so uncommon

When a Christian marries a Muslim, often there is pressure for one or the other to conform and convert. This may have a knock-on effect on

the “abandoned” family. The very existence of children can also be a problem. In Ghana there are (at least) two ways of perceiving children. In one system (more in the South) children are the responsibility of the wife’s family (specifically her brothers). In the North and East, they are the responsibility of the man’s family (specifically his brothers). For a

mixed North-South marriage, that can mean real problems. Everyone claims them (exclusively) or no-one claims them. If one spouse dies this can lead to very real problems. Where do the children go? Where does a living wife go?

Couples counsellors



Couples’ Counsellors comparing notes

As a foreigner what could I contribute? The couples being trained to help others were all Ghanaians. In my training sessions I helped them to learn to listen to the couples with problems, not to jump in with their preconceived ideas. To help the troubled couples to see more clearly what was happening in their marriage, and not to be “victims” of circumstances, or of other peoples’ ideas

or prejudices. This meant the couples looking at why they had entered the marriage in the first place, how they saw marriage in general and how they saw *their* marriage in particular.

The couples I trained spoke the local languages and were married themselves. They knew what it was to be Ghanaian and married, and so were trusted and listened to. I, a celibate foreigner, knew how to teach others to listen. Together we helped couples in difficulty. Not all marriages were “saved”, but the individuals were helped to make conscious decisions in their own lives. Only God can see into people’s hearts.

Michael Heap



Parents & Friends Association

Friday 3rd March 2017. 7.30pm Fundraiser/Bingo

Sunday 30th April 2017.

Mass 12 noon 9 Milrig Road for the Deceased Members of the Association & Fathers & Brothers, followed by Buffet 1.30pm

Friday 5th May 2017 7.30pm Fundraiser/Bingo

Sunday 27th August 2017

Annual Reunion Mass 12 noon

Lunch at King's Park Hotel 2pm

Friday 8th September 2017. 7.30pm Fundraiser/Bingo

Friday 11th November 2017. 7.30pm Fundraiser/Bingo



Your charitable prayers are requested

for those who have recently died
and our deceased parents,
relatives, friends and benefactors.



Fr. Richard Kinlen, MAfr.	South Shields	December 2016
Moir Greenhough	Ashton-under-Lyne	January 2016
Mrs Teresa Lingard	Preston	September 2016
Mary Jack	Bothwell	
Mr John Bell	Isle of Skye	
Mrs Colette Wilson	Shrewsbury	October 2016
Sr. Margaret Fingleton	Windsor	May 2016

May they rest in peace



St. Anthony's Burse



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Find out more about us at:

www.thewhitefathers.org.uk

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Gift aid form available on our **website** <http://www.thewhitefathers.org.uk>

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