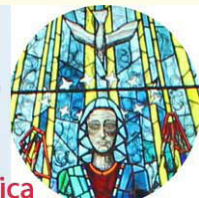
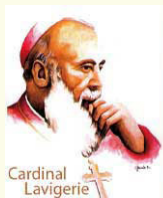


# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

## (WHITE FATHERS)



November: Month of the Holy Souls



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### Important News Flash

At 11.30 a.m. on 9th December 2018 there will be a concelebrated Mass of Thanksgiving for 150 years of Mission to Africa. It will be held at Our Lady, Queen of Apostles Church, Heston TW5 0RL. The Right Reverend John Wilson, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster will preside. Afterwards there will be a buffet in the Parish Hall . Friends, family, ex-students, supporters, parishioners - you are all invited to thank the Lord with us.

## Editor's Word.

The poet described Autumn as “the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness”. A beautiful image as the year gradually comes to an end. For many people in their “declining years” it is an image of their lives that is exact. Surrounded by family and friends, looked after and loved. So it should be for all. But for many people it is sadly and scandalously not so.



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

In this issue of our Magazine we have a couple of articles that may (hopefully) upset some people. We hear about trafficked people forced into prostitution so as to survive from day to day, and of people who profit from the trade in human lives and human dignity. We hear about men, women and children who are killed because of their religion or ethnicity, chased from their homes because of the selfishness of others. Will they have a peaceful old age? It seems unlikely.

Yet there is hope. Many people are working in this world for peace and respect for others. We hear of one Father who is helping Muslim women to get past their fears and false limits put upon them by themselves and simply accepting the status quo.

Much of this issue of the Magazine is devoted to the celebrations of 150 years of announcing the Good News in Africa. Announced by the White Fathers and White Sisters, all missionaries of Africa. This is not self congratulatory. We are not saying, “Aren’t we great?” We are saying, “Thank you, Lord, for allowing so many people over these 150 years, to hear the Good News and for allowing us, with all our limitations, to take part in your Mission.”

How many people have finished their lives with hope and the knowledge that God loves them, no matter who they are, no matter what they have done because the Good News was brought to them?

November is the month when we pray especially for the Dead and they will be remembered every day in our houses during Mass. Through the mists of ignorance, and sometimes of selfishness, we are prevented from seeing others as God sees us, but He is the one who brings fruitfulness to apparently barren lives and answers prayers made in love with the gift of Life.

# 150 Years Celebration in Rutherglen

This year the Missionaries of Africa (MAfrs) and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa MSOLA) in Britain are having two celebrations to mark 150 years of service to Africa and to the peoples of Africa. The second will take place Sunday 9th December 2018 in Heston, London. The first took place on Sunday 26th August 2018. Below are some of the photos giving the flavour of the event.



The fathers and brothers based in Rutherglen, together with some confreres come up from England and the parish clergy processed down towards the altar in St Columkille's church where several generations of White Fathers had been wel-

comed by a succession of parish priests since 1953. The church was full of well-wishers and parishioners, many of whom had known the missionaries from the time they were children. Once assembled on the sanc-



tuary behind the altar, the clergy and the entire congregation was welcomed first of all by Fr. Pat Hennessy the present Parish Priest of St. Columkille's.

Fr. Donald McLeod, MAfr then replied to the wel-





come on behalf of the MSOLA and MA-frs. Fr. Donald (from Barra) has worked in Tunisia, Tanzania and Rome (as a translator). After a time as editor of this Magazine, he became superior of the community in Rutherglen.

Then, at last came

the turn of the ladies, Sr. Marie McDonald, MSOLA, herself a Scot from Aberdeen, began to speak on behalf of the White Sisters and the White Fathers. Sr. Marie had spent many years working in Uganda before being elected Superior General of the White Sisters. Her present position is the Entity



Leader (superior) of the White Sisters in Northern Europe. These are her words: ***It's an honour for me to welcome you all to this Celebration of our 150 years: Missionaries of Africa – Brothers, Fathers, and Sisters all collaborating to announce the Good News and carry out the Apostolic dream of our founder Cardinal Lavigerie.***

***In fact our JUBILEE celebrations covers the PAST, the PRESENT and the FUTURE!***

***There's an old Ghanaian Proverb which states that:***

***"We look back in order to move forward!"***

***So over the past years we've first of all looked back in gratitude and repentance:***

**Gratitude for the Vision of our Founder Cardinal Charles Lavigerie who in 1868 and 1869 founded the Missionaries of Africa and then MSOLA and sent them out - first to the suffering people in North Africa and then beyond to the peoples of Sub – Saharan Africa.**

**We are grateful, yes, for all the good that God has accomplished in, with and through us but also for all that we have received from the wonderful peoples of Africa! Their hospitality which knows no bounds! Their wis-**



**dom, joy, capacity to celebrate, share and to endure to lose everything and yet start again the next day with courage and trust in God.**

**Grateful also to our families, friends and benefactors without whose spiritual and material support our mission would have been impossible.**

**Repentance too because as human beings we have sometimes failed to live up to our commitment and because of our human limitations and cultural conditioning we have made mistakes. We take heart – knowing that our**

**God can write straight with crooked lines and bring good out of those limits and mistakes. We want also to live the present with passion.**



**Cardinal Lavigerie would be the first to remind us of our vocation to be Apostles – no matter how**

***old we are or where we are. Nowadays most of our younger members are Africans fulfilling his great dream that the 'lasting work will be done by the Africans themselves when they become Christians and Apostles!'***

***Our challenge today is to go out still to Africa but also to the African World – no longer limited to Africa wherever we might be needed to serve and collaborate with others to transform the lives of people and society.***

***Here in U.K. a community of M.Afr is about to begin a new community in a Liverpool parish where many African immigrants live. There they will***



***Fr. Terry Madden MAfr. Provincial Delegate.  
New Liverpool community.***

***welcome the stranger and meet those of other faith traditions.***

***In Cardinal Lavigerie's time SLAVERY was still a horrifying reality - It was abolished but sadly it still exists – only in other forms. It's called Modern Slavery, or Trafficking in human persons... and it is happening often under our noses. Both our institutes have committed ourselves to passionately oppose***

***this modern slavery in small or big ways according to our possibilities. One of our sisters in London, aged 83, has started to minister to some of the victims of this evil trade – helping them to make a new start in life. And thirdly we look to the future with HOPE.***

***Yes we hope that the past 150 years of labour in the Lord's vineyard will continue to bear fruit... and that the seeds sown today will bear a good and rich harvest in the future and that our new members will find their own ways of being of living Cardinal Lavigerie's dream. So now let us begin our Celebration with JOY Thanksgiving and Hope in our hearts.***

After Sr. Marie had finished her speech of introduction, the Mass of Thanksgiving got under way. The main celebrant was Fr. Gerard Chabanon MAfr. Gerard is at present the Provincial of Europe, but in the past has been Provincial of East





Africa and Superior General. During the Mass Fr. Gerard was assisted by Rev. Deacon Bill McMillan, Deacon in St. Columbkille's.

During the Mass there were several readers from different countries and different Churches including a representative of the Salvation

Army. The lady in grey in the middle of the picture is the sister of Fr. Gerry Stones MAfr. Gerry worked for many years lecturing in seminaries in Ethiopia, Mozambique and our own House of Formation in London before being elected as Assistant General in Rome.



After the Gospel, read by Deacon Bill McMillan, Fr. Bill Russell MAfr. gave a few words on Mission. Fr. Bill Russell, from Ayrshire, has worked in Zambia and Tanzania and presently lectures on Oecumenism in Jerusalem and Edinburgh. Fr. Bill spoke on the psalmist's words that ***"1000 years are like a day in the eyes of the Lord."*** If taken literally, then the 150 years of the existence of MAfr and MSO-LA we were celebrating is not all that long a time (about 3 1/2 hours!) His idea was to put things into perspective, not vaunting the great achievements of the Missionaries but simply thanking God for all He has done through the Missionaries, and still does through us and all those who support, encourage and pray for us. He said an explicit "thank you" to the Parents and Friends Association, to the Clergy and people of St. Columbkille's for their perennial welcome and of course to the people of Africa who have given such a welcome to us and the Gospel. He continued by linking thanksgiving, gratitude and what goes with them - generosity which stands at the centre of our Christian life. He concluded by stressing again

that 150 years is the mere twinkling of an eye and yet there has been such a phe-



nomenal growth of the Church in Africa. He urged the Christians of Scotland, UK and Europe not to be downhearted but to remember that for Christians any dying (whether it be personal or in Church numbers) contains within it the promise of rising.



Members of the Parents and Friends Association

The Mass continued with the offertory procession. In addition to the hosts and wine, various objects were carried up alluding to the Mission in Africa. All the time the Mass was accompanied by a joyous Nigerian choir reminding all those







who had ever been to Africa of the lively and joyful liturgies and celebrations which are so much a part of our work and expressive of the life of the Church on that Continent.

The bread and wine for the Mass were brought up by the sister of Fr. Hugh Seenan MAfr. (he served in Mozambique and India and is at present in Malawi) and the sister of Fr. John Lynch MAfr (after many years in UK and USA working on Vocations, Aid and Development and supporting confreres in difficulties, he died in a tragic accident last year knocked over by a cyclist).



At the end of the Mass everyone made their way to the Parish Hall for the next part of the celebration where the different groups were able to mingle and meet. There were lots of other visitors including Mr. Ian McAllan, Provost of South Lanarkshire, who wrote a very gracious letter to the Missionaries afterwards. There was the choir, the



parishoners of St. Columbkille's, MAfrs, MSOLA, members of the Parents and Friends Association who have supported the White Fathers and various projects in Africa for years.

Maureen Burnett (Dunn) is seen here with Br. Ray Leggett MAfr (ex-Ghana).



Maureen's family were supporters of the White Fathers from the beginning in Rutherglen. Another brother, Br. Vincent Davies MAfr., who worked many years in Ghana as well as Vocation Promotion from Ratho, is also seen here with guest-speakers from Ghana and Nigeria. It was Br. Vincent



who took over much of the preparations for the ceremony when Fr. Donald fell ill. There was plenty to eat and drink and in the background, to remind us that we were in Scotland the pipers of St Francis Pipe Band kept up a continuous stream of music, until it was time for the next speaker, Owen Gormley.



Owen has known the White Fathers for very many years. His interests at present include Archives, so the White Fathers asked him to give a short talk on the history of the White Fathers in Scotland. Most people were aware of the presence of the Missionaries

of Africa in Scotland - not only in Rutherglen but in Ratho near Edinburgh and St. Andrews and on the Borders, and even Aberdeen,



but many of those present were unaware that when Charles Lav-  
igerie, later to be Cardinal, Arch-  
bishop of Algiers and Founder  
of the Missionaries of Africa and  
Missionary Sisters of Our Lady  
of Africa, was studying for the  
priesthood in St. Sulpice in Par-  
is, there was also a young Scot-  
tish priest studying there. This

Scottish student, having returned to Scotland, was eventually ordained to the  
priesthood, then rose to become a Monsignor before founding St. Columbkille's  
parish, Rutherglen, where the celebration was taking place. Coincidence? Ow-  
en's talk was very much appreciated.



To finish the celebration  
Br. Vincent thanked Fr.  
Pat Hennessy for his and  
his parishoners great  
kindness in allowing us  
to celebrate 150 years  
of God's goodness to us  
and to the people of Afri-  
ca, and for taking part in  
the Lord's Mission to the  
people of Africa.

Missionaries - Sister,  
Brothers, Fathers, Stu-  
dent all dedicated to  
one thing:  
To be Apostles,  
Nothing but Apostles  
in the service of the  
Church  
and the  
People of Africa.





## Human Trafficking, Forced Prostitution, Modern Slavery in Tandale

by Br. Elvis Ng'andwe (M.Afr)

*In the last issue of our Magazine, Br. Elvis wrote an article on dialogue with Muslims in Pemba. I asked him to write more about the work that they are doing in his parish of Tandale in Tanzania. He has sent us the following about an upsetting but very real problem there. There is no point tut-tutting or disapproving, something needs to be done in love for all concerned. I also promised Elvis to give him his correct title, Brother Elvis **not** Father Elvis. He is a brother to all the people of Tandale. Editor.*

Tandale is a place where all sorts of issues of apostolic interest abound. Human trafficking and prostitution are very rife in this vicinity. Among the main challenges facing our parish in Tandale is widespread commercial prostitution. After a lengthy discussion with the parish team and our office of Justice and peace, we decided that it would be essential to engage in dialogue with the people running the brothels. Some of these people are Catholics who belong to our parish. In our dialogue, we focused on the possibility of rescuing victims who were willing to quit prostitution and arranging for rehabilitation for them. We also requested that we be informed in matters where there were even suspicions of human trafficking. Finally we asked whether it was possible to close that business and try other alternatives. Upon further inquiry, we came across the Daughters of Mary Immaculate Sisters (DMI), who have been running a project concerning human trafficking in



Tanzania. The project is known as 'Springs of Hope'. We established a network with the DMI Sisters, who came to Tandale and gave us a workshop on how to rescue victims of human trafficking and prostitution.

The training we re-

ceived briefly focused on:

1. Rescue and legal services.
2. Capacity building and networking with other partners and local community.
3. Counselling and health care for the victims.
4. Life skills for the victims during rehabilitation.
5. Running community outreach programs to sensitize the local communities about the problem of human trafficking.
6. Reuniting the women with their families and re-integrating them into normal mainstream life.

In collaboration with DMI sisters, MSOLA sisters, and Tandale parish, our office of JPIC-ED Tanzania (M.Afrs) launched an outreach in an area called locally uwanja wa fisi literally translated as “the field of the hyena”. This is a place where a lot of brothels are to be found. We went there with loud speakers and music. There was a huge crowd that came to listen to our message. Basically, our message was about human trafficking and forced prostitution, informing people that it is never too late to do good. The information was passed via different means including music and drama. Already this outreach has started bearing fruits. We have received an overwhelming number of phone calls from different victims and whistle-blowers.

There was a Christian lady who came to our office seeking help. She said she



had been running a brothel for a long time and she earned her living through the rentals she got from the ladies who occupied her rooms. Following our outreach she was deeply moved and wanted to quit that business. She was very open and shared very personal, moral and ethical

challenges in running this sad business. We had several meetings with her. She has since taken a low profile but has not made final decision as to whether to continue with or abandon the brothel business. We have advised and encouraged her to do the right thing but the decision in the end is up to her. For now her main challenge has been to find an alternative business with which she can make a viable living. So far, she does not seem to be very impressed by different options we have suggested to her. We pray that God may enlighten us and also change her heart. We seek your prayers for the victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution. Every day we go to out into the field, we realise that it is a very sophisticated network. There are some very powerful people behind this business. It is our humble request that you say a little prayer for our team and the victims too. Especially at this historic time when we celebrate 150 years anniversary of our society of Missionaries of Africa, we remember the words of Cardinal Lavigerie, “I am human and nothing human is foreign to me.” At his time our cardinal fought against slavery and today slavery is disguised as human trafficking.



## Fr Francois Samson, Apostle to the waHaya in Tanzania

Fr Francois Samson was born in Angers, France, in January 1880. He studied in the diocesan seminary up to the reception of the sub-diaconate. Then aged twenty-four, he entered the novitiate in North Africa being finally ordained priest in 1906. His first appointment was to South Nyanza which at that time comprised all the dioceses now surrounding the South of Lake Victoria and also Rwanda. He was to spend the next forty-two years in Bukoba, serving in Rubya, Kashozi, Kagondo and Mugana. He returned to Europe for only two spells of leave, in 1924 and 1945, before retiring ill and almost blind. According to Bishop Kilaini, in his history of the diocese, of all the missionaries who worked there, Fr Samson is the best remembered and admired.

On his arrival the region was profoundly pagan. He began his apostolate by a regular routine setting off each morning on foot, with his cane and notebook. He entered each home irrespective of whose it was, Christians and non-Christians, rich and poor, chiefs and commoners. He made friends with them all. Gifted with a good memory, he never forgot the name of anybody he had met. Returning only in the evening, tired and hungry, he was hardly able to stand. This did not prevent him working late into the night, writing up the kiHaya words and expressions he had learnt during the day. His mastery of the kiHaya language enabled him to produce a dictionary and many studies of the customs and traditions of the people. Adapting Latin and French melodies, he composed hymns which are still in use today. Bishop Killaini, himself a muHaya, described them as masterpieces of kiHaya poetry.

In 1910, still a young missionary of thirty, he was appointed superior of the mission of Rubya. Up to that time, there were only 154 neophytes in Christian village. His predecessor had had a fractious relationship with the local Chief, Nyarubamba. Samson started visits to surrounding villages, some as far away as 25 kilometres and slowly the people accepted him. He developed a friendship with the Chief and they started projects together. The Chief mobilised the people, who worked for free, building bridges over the Ngono river and its tributaries. This enabled Fr

Samson's confreres to extend their safaris (journeys) on their bicycles, though he himself always went on foot.

Nyarubamba's son and successor Ruhinda followed in the footsteps of his father encouraging the people to become Christian. He gave to the mission plantations for the building of schools in which Samson organised the youth not only for education but he also taught them football and gymnastics. The biggest obstacle to becoming Christian, he observed, was the devotion to the ancestor cult, especially in times of illness. People found Christianity too dry and rational. Samson encouraged the Fathers in Rubya seminary to provide medical help. With the seminarians he put on colourful liturgical ceremonies. He also promoted devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Bishop Hirth had brought to the seminary a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes



accompanied by the seminarians' brass band and with hundreds of neophytes drumming, singing and dancing. A living mother in heaven who listened to their troubles and prayed for them appealed to the waHaya and she came to replace the ancestors as a mediatrix.

Fr Samson wrote articles for the White Fathers' magazine, notes on the language and customs, and studies of marriage. With the help of an outstanding catechist, Nicholas Mugongo, he made translations of the gospels and of spiritual writings like the Imitation of Christ. His entries in the parish diary contain lots of little stories from the daily life of the people.

His temperament was lively to say the least, and his intimate knowledge of kiHaya was used to express his volcanic outbursts of anger. The people called him Kajungu magundu – the Roaring Bull and Ikishanju kitera em-

bandwa – Hammer of the Ancestral Diviners. One of his confrères compared him to Moses descending from Sinai. But he was well aware of this fault and, when he cooled down, he would humbly ask pardon, even of those much younger than himself. In his old age, sometimes people mischievously teased him to make him angry because when he repented he would give them presents. One day, preaching at Mass, he became very angry with what he perceived as the misdeeds of his faithful and told off the congregation in very strong terms. When he had finished his sermon, he began to take off the vestments telling the people that he was too angry to celebrate Mass. However, they would have none of it. They told him they did not mind his tough language, they deserved it and they were used to him. In the end, he was persuaded to continue with the celebration of the Mass. In 1949, sick and going blind, he returned to France. The Christians of Rubya wrote to Bishop Lanctot, who was on leave, begging him to bring Fr Samson back. “We know well that his health will prevent him working but at least we shall see him and he can rest in this land which he has made fruitful with his sweat.” They were ready to pay the airfare. “He is ours, this beloved father; he should come to finish his days among us.”

However, he was too ill for the journey and he remained at Billère. His retirement was truly a passion. After a stroke his left side was paralysed and he suffered much from a stomach ulcer. Yet he remained a man of prayer, always the first in Chapel for spiritual exercises. As his sight deteriorated, he struggled to recite the breviary daily. In those days, before the practice of concelebration, he received permission to celebrate Mass using the same text daily, that of the Blessed Virgin. He retained his prodigious memory even in his old age and could remember precise events and exact dates. His greatest joy was talking about his beloved waHaya. In October 1961 he was suffering so much from his stomach that an operation was decided on. He never recovered, expiring on 2nd November 1961. He died poor. Looking for some mementos for his family, his superior found in his room only a few clothes, a pocket watch and a rosary.



# The Lands of Blood and Bile: Who is Fighting Whom?

by Fr. Victor Domshiwe Shehu MAfr.

*I was aware of the terrible violence in some parts of Nigeria but felt that only a Nigerian should write an article here on the subject. I asked him to be non-partisan and so he sent me references to his sources for all the events and figures he has written here. I have omitted them for brevity. The Editor.*

Conflict is found in every society, even in the most civilized societies; but its causes may vary.

Nigeria as a nation has seen many conflicts. From the civil war of 1967 that nearly ripped it apart, through the woes of Boko Haram terrorism to the most recent Farmer-Fulani herdsmen clashes, there is nearly no-one in Nigeria who has not experienced the bitter taste of war.

But the wars in Nigeria are so confusing. Sometimes one wonders who is fighting whom? The Civil War was a clear battle between the Nigerian Army and the Bia-



Houses burnt by Fulani herdsmen

fran secessionists, but other wars have had no clear-cut opponents, resembling rather terrorism or insurgency. Although Boko Haram had the agenda of Islamizing Nigeria, they attacked other Muslims and destroyed mosques. Niger Delta Militants claimed to be fighting

for a greater share of oil resources yet, whilst possessing most of the wells, they remained impoverished for years before resorting to killing of civilians and kidnapping expatriates for ransoms instead. In North Central Nigeria, what began as a Christian-Muslim conflict later spiralled into a Fulani-Taroh conflict; (Taroh people are a minority tribe in Plateau state). Sometimes it looks as if the attack is targeting Muslims or Christians, other times, it looks as if it is an ethnic cleansing, still other times it looks like murder of specific individuals along religious and ethnic lines. The most recent one however, is a clear clash between farmers and Fulani herdsmen and has some religious undertones as the Fulanis are mostly Muslim and the farmers Christian.

About 80% of Nigerians work in the agricultural sector (farmers or herders). In the past, these two groups co-existed without any problems, as I remember clearly as a child. Now there are fierce battles between these two groups. The herders (mainly Fulanis) accuse farmers of blocking their cattle and farming on the lands where they graze their animals. The farmers accuse the Fulanis of destroying their farmlands, raping their women and fouling their drinking water by allowing their animals to drink from the same rivers where they drink. These accusations and counter accusations have led to fierce clashes between the two groups with the farmers very often coming off worse; being killed, injured, abducted and displaced from their homes, since the Fulani herdsmen possess sophisticated weapons and attack out of the blue, whereas farmers rely on locally manufactured guns and knives that cannot match those of the herdsmen and are often isolated on their farms.

In Benue state alone, from January 2017 to June 2018, 4,194 farmers were killed and 24,148 made homeless, and 10 Fulani herdsmen were killed by the Army. In the same State, 128,379 thatched houses were torched, 67,197 zinc-roofed houses were destroyed and 30 churches razed to the ground. In the last raid two Catholic priests and fifteen other worshippers were murdered during Mass. Farmers in other states have experienced similar attacks from the Fulani herdsmen



Motorbikes burnt by Fulani herdsmen

Jos, the capital of Plateau State (hitherto known for peace) was almost reduced to ashes in 2011 in what was clearly a Christian-Moslem conflict. The violence spread with sporadic waves of conflicts between tribes, among tribes, between religions and within religions. One thing that is sure is that each time, children and women always bore the brunt of the violence. In

2003 Fulani attacked Pandam, a village in Plateau state, about seventy children were killed and 46 women raped and killed. This gave rise to a series of attacks and counter attacks between the Fulanis, and the Taroh people.

After the General Elections there was relative calm for about two years. How-



ever, as Nigeria prepares for another General election, conflicts have been reignited once again. On June 25th, 2018 about 86 people were reported killed and 50 houses burnt in attacks carried out in 11 villages in Plateau state by Fulani herdsmen. Then, on the 28th of August, 2018, 8 people were murdered in cold blood along Barkin Ladi Road, and 12 persons were murdered by gunmen on the 3rd of September, 2018 in Du. When will we see the peace again in Plateau? Many Christians believe that the Fulani activities are widely supported by the Islamic community in Nigeria and that those responsible for security look on whilst people and property are destroyed. Most of those in charge of internal security are Muslims. But Fulani herdsmen have told me that local farmers attack and kill their cows for no reason and the Fulanis feel they are being treated as if they are not Nigerians at all, and as if livestock rearing was inferior to farming, so they defend themselves. They claim the media is silent about casualties suffered by the herdsmen.

Most Africans have strong loyalties to their ethnic and/or religious groups. In addition, Nigeria is prone to many of these conflicts because of weak state institutions and a lack of political will. Individuals within the state have become more powerful than the state, acting with impunity, perpetuating violence for their own selfish political or financial goals.

The causes of the numerous conflicts in Nigeria can be attributed to religion, land disputes and political instability, but people are killed, children slaughtered or orphaned, men and women widowed, family members separated, families made homeless and the youth left hopeless. North Central Nigeria is the food production hub of Nigeria, but fearing attacks, people abandon their farms, leading to unemployment, poverty, hunger and famine.



Women flee attacks from herdsmen

Since 2011, over 2 million people have been killed within Benue, Plateau, Nasara and Kaduna states alone.

Please pray for all the people of our country, for peace, honesty and responsible governance.

## Africa is changing by José Maria Cantal Rivas, Wf.

Africa is changing fast and so the last Chapter of the Missionaries of Africa insisted that: Whilst accompanying the People of Africa in their aspiration to democracy and good governance, our Society should seek Justice, Peace and Reconciliation, dialogue with Muslims and adherents of other religions. To do this every confrere should try to read the signs of the times, and act with discernment in an appropriate way, with particular attention to young people who see no future for themselves.



It was with this in mind that after 23 years of priesthood, I asked for a year of further studies to bring myself up to date. I really didn't want to follow another course in Theology, nor anything like that. In the end we settled on improving my Classical Arabic, a month doing the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius and a course on Emotional Intelligence and Coaching. My brother had studied this last subject and his enthusiasm for it was catching!

I returned to Algeria with my new diploma in hand and after talking it over with my community, I started to look around in the Press and on Social Media to see what might be happening and what might be needed as regards Emotional Intelligence and Coaching. I decided to start out by offering 6 morning sessions, each with a specific topic to see how things would go.

1. Leaving your comfort zone (trying new things)
2. How do you use your time?
3. Getting over resentments and grudges.
4. Getting rid of beliefs which hold us back (I'm stupid, incompetent, no good at..., etc.).
5. How to start changes in your life
6. Stop being a victim etc.





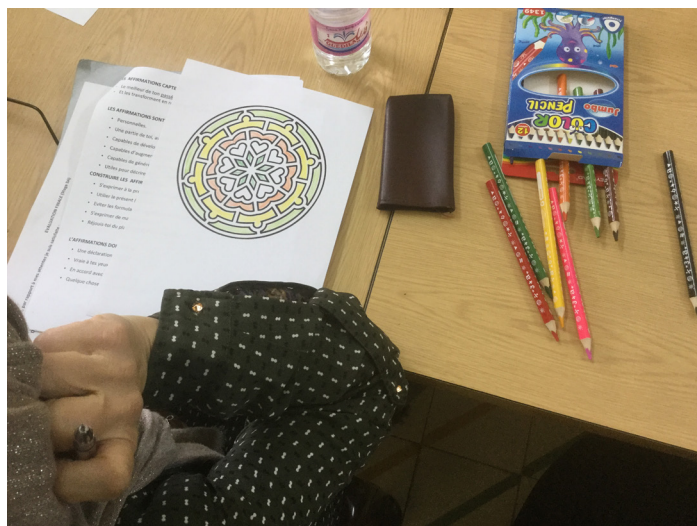
Then I found a place to hold the sessions and started advertising. Chewing finger nails when no-one replied! What if no-one comes? 4 days before the start, people started applying. A huge sigh of relief! But these people are going to pay for their sessions, so I had better come up with something worthwhile and professional.



So, 9a.m. – 1 p.m. the group (minimum 6, maximum 20) gets input, information, data, videos, and questions are put to them. But most of the session the participants work in twos (which change every hour) putting into practice what they have just learned.

For example: if I highlight that most people resist change because they are afraid of failing or afraid of other people's reactions, the participants in pairs voice their own fears experienced in their daily lives. They then look at how they might approach these fears and get past them by imagining alternatives to what they have tried (and failed) in the past.

Very quickly "my students" begin to realise that the main obstacles to change are themselves. It is no use waiting for happiness to arrive by post, or by imagining it. It will come only by perseverance and discipline (like going to the gym if you



want muscles). With all this I also have to respect that we are in Algeria, a Muslim and fairly traditional society. In addition, most of my course participants are women. Therefore, the sessions never go on after 5 p.m., the usual rhythmic music and dance I

use are replaced by unaccompanied singing, and when the pair is made up of a man and a woman we adapt the exercises, because too personal exchanges of experiences would be considered unacceptable.

But when all is said and done, even taking into account the specific local culture, people are people wherever you go and they face the same realities. What is new in 21st Century Algeria is that there are people who are willing to try possible solutions to the problems they face in life which none of the people who surround them have tried before. In taking part in my sessions they show that they are willing to take risks to become happier, more coherent people. Even though some people see them as being “a bit odd” they are convinced that in their circumstances they need new remedies for new problems. The sessions are given in French and in Arabic, and I try as far as I can to use videos and examples from the Arab-Muslim culture. Partly I do this to avoid any idea that I am trying to convert anyone, but also, and particularly, to show that the methods of change are both doable and compatible with their culture. For example, something shared by the Algerian female basketball team from the Paralympics has a greater impact than something similar (even if the video sound quality is better) from a European or American source. Looking for these examples helps me also with my search for inculturation. It helps me to see better the way Africa is changing and how Africans themselves see and confront these changes – huge increase in women going to university and taking on more influence in the workplace, the influence of the Internet, demographics, new forms of social organisation, spiritual aspirations





beyond or outside religion, urbanisation etc., etc. Part way through, then at the end of each series of sessions we have anonymous appraisals where the participants talk about how the course is affecting them and their lives.

It gives me the opportunity to see if I can improve on the presentations, but it also gives me great joy to see the way participants grow in confidence and awareness. These times are moments for giving thanks for God's goodness. Perhaps you are asking yourself why a White Father is doing this work? In the Gospels people come to Jesus to ask how to take decisions or how to move on from grudges, how to live their marriages well or how to decide on their priorities in life. Others come with hurts of one kind or another. In each case Jesus offers a radically new way of looking at things. Jesus tries to awake in each one the "image of God" in each one so that they can respond to God's call. This call can be stifled by fear, idleness, seeing oneself as victim, guilt or holding grudges.

People signing up for my courses usually don't know that I am a priest, so I am open about it from Day 1. It is important that, if they become happier people, it is due in part to a disciple of Jesus who sent out his disciples to raise the dead, heal hurts, offer hope. Our work is not a matter of proposing a different dogma, it is first and foremost offering a better Life, a lifestyle that is compassionate to all, an approach to reality that helps us to hope. If, with these sessions, I can help my Algerian sisters and brothers (almost all of whom are Muslim) to surmount the different challenges in their daily lives, I don't see how that is different from helping them with a hospital or a school or a dispensary. We are called to be creative in putting ourselves at the service of humankind.

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Parents & Friends Association

## EVENTS

***A sincere 'Thank You' to all those who took part in the 150 year celebration at St. Collumbkille's and congratulations to all those (too many to mention) who made it into the success it undoubtably was.***

Onwards to 2068!





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for those who have recently died  
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**Thomas William Airey**

**Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

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(sister of Fr Pat Donnelly MAfr)

**May they rest in peace**



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White Fathers in England & Wales:  
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