

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

(WHITE FATHERS)



February 2019

Issue No. 442



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Editor's Word

In this issue we describe the celebration in Heston of 150 years of the Mission of the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. It was a joyful celebration, but in those 150 years there was also sadness, as for any institution or individual. There was also fear at times and discouragement and anger and doubt.



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

The first 2 groups of White Fathers set off from Algiers with hope and joy. In both cases, they were murdered by the people they trusted. Yet Cardinal Lavigèrie sent more missionaries into Africa by a different route – through East Africa to Uganda. At last the Mission had started! But the first Christians, Catholic and Anglican, were cruelly put to death, the Martyrs of Uganda. Yet the Mission carried on and now many thousands of people visit the shrine of the Martyrs of Uganda in Namugongo in trust and hope.

And so it goes on. In this issue, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald writes about the 19 martyrs of North Africa, honoured by the Church and by the civil authorities. A great joy now but terrible for those who suffered. Fr. Charlie Dekkers wished to celebrate his 70th birthday with Muslim friends in Tizi-Ouzou. He arrived at the White Fathers' house just in time to be murdered by people to whom he had dedicated his life. What must he have thought at the last moments? We don't know, but since his life was one of generosity, fuelled by hope and trust, it is almost certain his last moments were also moments of trust and hope.

However, there is something wrong with the last sentence. Those were not his last moments. They were the last moments where he was living on hope and trust, but only before he saw finally what he was hoping for and trusting in – the love of God. God's love for us and God's love that we are can share with others. "Go out and proclaim the Good News "Love one another as I have loved you". That is what the Mission is about.

In this issue you will find a short article by a newly ordained confrere who is in a particularly difficult place and situation. I could have left this article out and only showed the glorious and happy side of our missionary lives, but that would have been dishonest. The life of a missionary is, first and foremost, the life of any Christian.

Each person reading this letter will have had, or will have now, moments of hurt, discouragement, disappointment, anger, doubt, fear, loss and sadness. It is all part of being human. But we have been promised something beyond these moments. By Baptism, each of us is called to live in the love of God with others, so that no hurt or setback is the "end". The "end" is the fulfilling of Jesus' promise, "I will be with you always even to the end..." "Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ".

Missionary of Africa Martyrs.

Personal reflections by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald MAfr

Nouakchott, Mauritania, 1994. That year I was invited to the annual diocesan meeting which takes place between



Fr. Alain Dieulangard, Wf

Christmas and the New Year. In the evening of 27 December, the Feast of St John the Evangelist, I was preparing to celebrate Mass with the community of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Suddenly came the news that four Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) had been assassinated in Tizi-Ouzou, Kabylia, Algeria. I burst into tears. Alain Dieulangard, Charles Deckers, Jean Chevillard and Christian Chessel: I knew all of them.

Only a few years before I had preached a retreat for my confreres in Algeria, and Christian Chessel, shortly after his final oath of commitment in the Society of Missionaries of Africa and his ordination as deacon by Mgr Teissier, Archbishop of Algiers, in Rome, in November 1991, had been one of the two deacons who assisted me at my episcopal ordination. How to react to this terrible news? What better way than to celebrate the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ in which these confreres had just shared through the gift of their lives? Gift, certainly, for these four men, in the same way as Mgr Pierre Claverie, Bishop of Oran, and the fourteen other men and women religious with whom they will be beatified as martyrs, had not waited until the moment of their death to offer their lives. This death came as the crowning act of lives entirely given to God within the mission of the Church in Algeria. As the Bishops of Algeria declared after the announcement that the Beatification would take place,



Fr. Charles Deckers, Wf

these martyrs are witnesses (that is the meaning of the term ‘martyr’) of the greatest love which is to give one’s life for those one loves. They are “witnesses to a spirit of fraternity without borders” because they remained in solidarity with numerous Algerians, “Muslims seeking meaning in their lives, men and women, who as artisans of peace, persecuted for the sake of justice, had remained faithful to death during the dark decade of so much bloodshed in Algeria.”

The four Missionaries of Africa were all very different: Alain, involved in the charismatic movement; Charles, practical, adapting well to local conditions; Jean, a born leader; Christian, the young intellectual. They were nevertheless united, for they had all drunk from the same source: the instructions that Cardinal Lavigèrie had given to the Missionaries of Africa: love those to whom one has been sent, make an effort to learn their language and speak it well, get to know and appreciate their traditions and customs, show respect for their religious beliefs, put oneself humbly at their service in all sorts of ways – all of these aspects of the spirit of Lavigèrie could be found in these four men, each one in his own way. The testimonies of both Christians and Muslims confirm this.

It can be added to this that all four were deeply spiritual persons, men of prayer, who wanted to serve the Lord and not their own interests. This is why they felt very much at ease within the project of the Church of Algeria which Bishop Claverie described in the following way: “We are, and we want to be, missionaries of God’s love, that love which we have discovered in Jesus Christ. This love, infinitely respectful of human beings, does not impose itself, does not impose anything in fact, bringing no force

to bear on consciences or hearts. With gentleness, and by its very presence, it frees whatever is bound in chains, it reconciles that which is torn apart, it raises up that which is crushed, brings new life where there was no hope and no strength". In a reflection written one month before his death Christian Chessel tried to provide a synthesis of this approach in what he called "Mission in weakness". "To recognize, welcome, and accept one's own weakness would seem to be a necessary, inevitable, preliminary step," he wrote, "especially for a missionary". This allows one to forge with those men and women to whom one has been sent relations characterized by an absence of power, or, according to another favourite expression of Christian, "by the language of *discreta caritas*".



Fr. Christian Chessel. Wf

The four White Fathers of Tizi-Ouzou were conscious of their weakness. They had a good command of the languages of the country, Arabic and Berber, but they knew that they would always remain foreigners, even if Charles Deckers, out of love for the Algerians, had at one time taken out Algerian nationality. They were also conscious that their situation was precarious, because of the insecurity which reigned in the country. For reasons of prudence they had restricted their activities, not wishing to run unnecessary risks; they were not looking for death. Yet they wanted to remain in Algeria. This was a personal choice, for those in charge of the Society of Missionaries of Africa and the Bishops responsible for the Church of Algeria had asked the permanent members of this Church to make their own discernment and to decide for themselves: stay or leave. They opted to remain in Algeria out of love for its inhabitants who were going through a terrible time of crisis; out of love for the families they knew which were often losing loved ones, killed in ambushes; out of love for the upright

people with whom they came in contact and who were longing for greater justice, for the poor people who were suffering, the students hoping for a brighter future. Their friends and the members of their own families often asked them: “What are you doing there (in Algeria)?” They would readily answer, using the words of Pierre Clavérie, “It is good to stay at the bedside of a friend who is sick”.



Fr. Jean Chevillard, Wf.

We can say that these four, and indeed all the nineteen men and women who make up this group of martyrs, had understood the words of Jesus: “I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed, but if it dies, it produces many seeds, The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and wherever I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me” (Jn 12:24-26).

In reality the ceremony of Beatification is a way for the Church to answer “Amen” to this saying of Jesus. Through the gift of their lives the martyrs have rejoined their Lord, and they are honoured by the Father because they have entered into his glory. They have become for the Church of Algeria, and for all of us, models and intercessors.

The 19 religious, priests and a bishop, all killed during the Algerian Civil War between 1994 and 1996, were declared Blessed on 8th December 2018 in Oran before a crowd of Muslims and Christians, religious and government dignitaries, Algerians and non-Algerians.

My first mission in the Ituri region of Congo

By Fr. Francis Xavier Angkosaala MAfr., a Ghanaian confrere ordained in 2018.



We are called to serve God in every part of the world as a missionary. When Jesus had finished instructing his disciples, they were sent out to preach the good news and that is what a missionary is called to do. For my part, I have done eighty per cent of my missionary formation here in Congo. How I wish to have a change for my first mission after ordination after so many years of difficulties and trauma in the Congo.

I arrived in Bunia, the capital of the province of Ituri, on the 26th October, 2018 and all the confreres were there to welcome me. What struck me most was the negativity of some people. Everything was negative, with everything and everybody criticised. This was where I am to serve my first mission as a Missionary of Africa. Beginning the pastoral work and encountering such attitudes is very difficult and frustrating.

Jesus came to serve and gives his life to everybody so that we can enter the kingdom of God already here on earth. How can we give our lives in a mission when we are not welcomed? Did not Jesus himself go to a different town when His presence was not welcome and did he not tell his followers to do the same?

I went to introduce myself to the bishop of the diocese. I was shocked to hear from the bishop that the place where I was to begin my missionary life as a priest is full of Christians living a double life; occultism, magic, profanation of the Holy Communion, etc. There are eleven millions practicing Catholics, by this I mean those considered to be in a “regular” situation as regards the sacraments.



Ituri region of Congo

humiliated those persons before the congregation.

Many people come to me for prayers and blessings. On several occasions, I was warned by Catholics that some of those asking for prayers etc. are Protestants or Muslims. When I told them I was there for everybody, they were shocked.

Poisoning people is on the increase. It is done through food or water, but some people here believe it can be done through the 'air' to 'tie' people spiritually. I do not believe the latter, but so many people do.

Tribalism is very strong. Even a Missionary of Africa community was accused of taking side with one tribal group against another. Insecurity in our outstations of our parish causes our our Christians to live in fear so that they advised us against going there to say Mass, it is too dangerous.

Refugees are pouring into the small town of Bunia like rainwater because they are attacked both day and night. Goods are stolen, houses burnt down. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by tribal wars, political wars and that deadly disease - Ebola. The Bishop has

He told me to be very careful during Mass, especially at communion time. "Make sure that the person receiving the communion consumes it in front of you," he insisted. To my greatest surprise, I had three persons who wanted to go outside with the Holy Communion. I had to call them back to consume the host in front of me. I do not know what may happen to me having





Frs. Francis and Paco who escaped from Gety

forbidden sharing the sign of peace during the Mass for fear of Ebola. In some of our outstations, chapels have been destroyed and Holy Communion profaned or stolen. We risk our lives daily and we only count on the protection of Almighty God. I have

been in danger before from the brigands when in training in my first mission. Just like St. Paul who was let down in the basket, through a window to escape death, I escaped from the rebels with Paco Otos through the heavy rains in the hills of Gety. Miracles exist and are occurring in our daily lives. Just after we passed there, the Caritas car was attacked and the charity workers had everything stolen – even the clothes they stood up in. I believe that Christ is with us on the mission. Before going to that village, we had been told “you may well be going to die as the first martyrs here”. But we came back safe and sound that time. Sometimes I ask God, why? Why on my first mission? War, Ebola, tribal killing, kidnapping. Christians here are very enthusiastic for the Mass and are always asking for blessings. Yet where is the Gospel in their daily lives? The small church is full to bursting-point. Yet there are many and deep divisions. I preached one day concerning the division which exists between Christians. I invited them to live in unity for the sake of peace. Some thanked me for preaching; others told me to be very careful or my life here would be very short. Yet I cannot keep silent. The Good News must be preached.



Fr. Francis Xavier Angkosaala

Roots. *Fr. William Crombie MAfr recently returned from Tanzania gives his impressions of the 150 year celebration “where it all began”.*



What a surprise ! I was asked to take part in the official opening of the Jubilee Year 2018 – 2019, marking 150 years since the foundation by Cardinal Charles Lavigerie of the the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) and Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters).

This took place in Tunisia, North Africa from the 12th to the 17th December 2018. Our Jubilee began with a pilgrimage in the footsteps of Cardinal Lavigerie: first, to the Villa Odo, built by the Cardinal in 1869 at La Marsa, at the time a small fishing village some eight kilometres from Tunis, nowadays a popular tourist resort with a beach of yellow sand fringed by palm trees. He established an orphanage and a dispensary there in buildings now housing the parish of St Cyprian and a Government school.



The ruins of the ancient city of Carthage are nearby; we visited the great amphitheatre of Carthage where St. Perpetua and her handmaid St. Felicity, mother of a newborn baby, were thrown to the wild beasts.

Then on to the ruins of the basilica where St Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage and Primate of Africa, was laid after his martyrdom in 258. A steep climb up the mountain dominating the ancient port of Carthage brought us to the Basilica St Louis of Carthage. It is a magnificent building, a mixture of Gothic, Arab, and Romanesque styles, in brilliant colours. Consecrated by the Cardinal in 1890, it was nationalized by the Tunisian state in 1964, and now serves as a dazzling concert and conference hall and has been renamed the





Acropolion. The old seminary which trained White Father missionaries until 1964 is just next door. It is now a museum of ancient artefacts retrieved from the ruins of Carthage. Next day we had a long coach ride through mist and drizzle into the Tunisian mountains to visit Thibar, home to an important Christian community in the days of St Augustine. Thibar is remembered by older Missionaries of Africa as the training centre for several generations of Brothers, and also because of the

great farm in Thibar which was not only an important source of income for the Mission, but which also aimed at being a centre for excellence in the best farming methods – methods which could then be used for food production all over Africa. The old workshops are still there, some derelict, some still in use. The enormous house of the Brothers is still there too and in good condition, and serves as the National Tunisian Agricultural College. We were well received and sampled the Thibarine liquor still produced from the vines brought from France to Tunisia by the Brothers. On the 16th December, 2018 there was a great Mass of Thanksgiving in the Cathedral of Tunis, whose construction was begun by Cardinal Lavigerie. The current Archbishop of Tunis, Msg. Ilario Antoniassi, presided and preached, and present also were



and present also were Archbishop Paul Desfarges of Algiers and Bishop John Macwilliam, M.Afr., Bishop of Laghouat/Gardaia, a diocese which covers a good bit of the Sahara desert. We remembered the nineteen martyrs of Algeria, beatified in Oran, Algeria on 8th December, 2018, and



gave thanks to God for all the fruit that the seeds planted by Cardinal Lavigerie had produced over 150 years. At the front of the nave of the great cathedral sat a good assembly of White Sisters, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (brought to Tunisia by the Cardinal),

and Religious Sisters from congregations founded by the White Sisters. There were descendants of Italian families long settled in Tunisia, French expatriates working in Tunisian factories, but most of all many young Africans from sub-Saharan Africa – some working in Tunis, others studying in Tunis's many colleges and universities. From among these students were drawn the members



of the choir which stunned us with magnificent music: beautiful polyphonic Kyrie, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, but also young and vibrant songs from different parts of Africa. In the congregation too, some Tunisian Christians, who at great personal cost in an officially

Moslem country share the faith of Saints Cyprian, Perpetua and Felicity, and Cardinal Lavigerie. The organ swelled, the drums resounded – it was a wonderful Mass. There were other great moments too, but as I journey back to Britain, my thoughts and prayers are with the little Christian community of Tunisia, and especially with all the young students from sub-Saharan Africa who remain steadfast in their faith and who Sunday by Sunday are there at the Mass. (Not to forget the fidei donum priests from Ivory Coast who have come to Tunisia to help the Church there.) Other impressions of Tunisia? Houses paved with marble, with walls covered by elaborately designed tiles – lovely to look at, but chilly in winter! And cats, beautiful cats! The streets of Tunis are full of them!



Through the Intercession of Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera

My wife Peggy Kulyanyingi and I, (Fredrick Kalegga), were married on 25 May 2002 and welcomed into the world with joy our baby girl, Mary Immaculate Bridget Nawajje, on 13 September 2003. But our beautiful daughter was taken to heaven after only 8 months.



Catherine Kisakyamaria
Mapeera

We tried for another baby but this was the beginning of a period of mockery, agony, patience, perseverance, obedience, temptation, insults, persecution, suffering, humiliation, and discouragement. In most African societies sterility or miscarriages are not only sources of sadness for the couple, but can be looked on with suspicion, or resentment, or even anger by the extended family. It is considered a very great misfortune.

On 3 June 2007 we made the pilgrimage to the Uganda Martyrs shrine in Namugongo in sorrow and agony because we were childless. The pilgrimage consoled me and I tried to surrender everything to Jesus through the intercession of the Uganda Martyrs.

But by the end of 2012, it had become clear that neither medical interventions nor prayers were helping my wife to sustain a pregnancy. Neither did deliverance prayers work! By this time my wife had experienced ten miscarriages since the death of our only daughter. We were advised to try Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers, Director of Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in USA. I hesitated because of the very high costs involved. But eventually it seemed our only hope.

On 14 November 2012 my wife underwent 2.5 hours of surgery undertaken by Dr. Thomas W. Hilgers, Dr. Hilgers has an interna-

tional reputation and wide experience.

The findings unexpectedly suggested yet more extensive robotic surgery and it had to be on 30 November 2012, or we would have to wait another 2 – 3 months in USA and more expense! On 26 November 2012 the Hospital Administrator informed us that to confirm the robotic surgery we had to pay in a large part of the money within 4 days. I immediately rang my brother back home in Uganda who took out a bank loan for us and on 30 November



Landing site of Mapeera in Uganda
on Lake Victoria

2012 my wife underwent 6 hours of robotic surgery which seemed successful. But despite all this surgery and after-care and getting into debt, my wife's miscarriages continued. Heartbreaking!

On 28 December 2012 while praying before the tomb of Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera, I seemed to hear a voice saying, "Go and work for the beatification cause of

Fr. Mapeera and his Companions." I accepted and asked God; "for the gift of the Holy Spirit to accomplish this mission because I am a poor sinner not worthy the assignment." I was really struck by this message but I kept it a secret in my heart!

On 18 July 2014 I and my wife started mentioning Fr. Mapeera as blessed among the litany of our "Home Interceders" during our joint morning prayers. I spent a whole hour of morning prayers including the Rosary with tears flowing down my cheeks. I did not know why. This was my first time to experience such a phenomenon!



Commemoration of Mapeera.
Lake Victoria

By 3 December 2014 we had spent 10 years undertaking various spiritual and medical interventions without my wife Peggy being able to conceive and carry a pregnancy to term. So we decided to abandon all previous prayers/medications and call upon the Apostle of Uganda, Fr. Mapeera (if he was before the throne of



Uganda Martyrs Shrine, Namugongo

God) to intercede for us and we would name the child Simeon Lourdel Mapeera.

We began asking others to pray to Mapeera for us but only began the Novena ourselves on 4 May 2015 to coincide with his feast day. We prayed, “May our weakness in faith never delay the hour of God’s mercy for the

beautification cause of Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera.”

On 3 June 2015 the feast of Uganda Martyrs we travelled on foot again to Namugongo praying repeatedly “Jesus Son of David have mercy on us.”

On 1 September 2015 my wife had an ultrasound scan indicating a normal foetus aged 6 weeks and 4 days! We had abandoned all scientific medications and were relying only on God’s Providence. During this period, we continued the same Novena. Our conclusion is that “It can be proved beyond reasonable doubt that our victory was through the intercession of Blessed Simeon Lourdel Mapeera.”

On 18 April 2016 our miraculous baby girl was born at 11:20am after 12 years of sterility. Despite the fact that she was female, I named her Mapeera to fulfill my promise of sharing her name with the Apostle of Uganda on 3 December 2014.

My father was unable to name our daughter because of a stroke some time before. When I came to name her Mapeera there were objectors but I told them that “Her clan surname is Mapeera.” During the pregnancy the scans couldn’t show the

sex of the child, so I had been convinced it would be a boy. On 21 April 2016 we presented and consecrated our miraculous baby girl we named her Catherine of Siena. My wife Peggy added another name Kisakyamaria meaning “Mary’s love”.

On 23 April 2016 Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala baptized Catherine Kisakyamaria Mapeera. And I launched her Baptismal Magazine. Numerous people subscribed. The opening theme of the magazine was taken from that of the feast of Uganda Martyrs on 3 June 2007, “I no longer live but Christ lives in me” when we had entrusted our barrenness to the Uganda Martyrs. The closing theme was taken from that of the feast of Uganda Martyrs on 3 June 2015, “You will be my witnesses in families and societies”.

On 6 November 2016 the opening session of the Informative Process for the beatification cause of Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera took place. On 2 February 2017 I officially gave my verbal testimony for the beatification cause of Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera to the Rubaga Diocesan Tribunal. On 8 September 2018 the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Diocesan Tribunal for the beatification of Servant of God Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera handed over its findings at a Mass at Nabulagala Parish the Vice Postulator Fr. Richard Nnyombi to submit them to Papal Nuncio for further action.



Our family

The principal miracle forwarded to the Vatican was that of our miraculous baby girl, Catherine Kisakyamaria Mapeera!

With the Maasai in Kenya.

After many years of Mission Fr. Rini van Boekhoven MAfr has retired to his native Netherlands. He writes about his last appointment in Africa.



Maasai Elders

In 2016, our East African Province set up a new evangelisation project among the Maasai in an area some 20 miles outside Nairobi. I was one of the pioneers of this project. Our housing was quite basic. We called it 'The Bethany Centre'. I soon met and made friends with some of the local Maasai. There was Ole Gakuyia Nteeyia, Ole Olchoro Onyore, and Ole Kioch. Ole is a term of respect so they began to call me Ole Rini!

This was a unique experience for me and my confreres. Somehow the Gospel came alive as we witnessed our Maasai friends living out their vocation day after day lovingly taking care of their cattle, goats, sheep and other animals. They knew them all by name. Our first experience of living there, as the dry season took hold, was worrying to say the least, especially for our Maasai friends. The cows were getting weaker and weaker. We were able to count their ribs! The fields were bare of grass. Happily, there was some hay cut earlier in the year, but the cows don't like hay much. Baboons became a big problem venturing close to the livestock and grabbing the weaker sheep or goats and, worst of all, drinking the cows' water when they got the chance.

At Christmas 2016 we welcomed our Provincial and his Assistant from Nairobi. We thanked the Lord for our Maasai friends who showed they appreciated our coming among them by



Goats and sheep coming home

the warmth of their welcome. We were invited to a big feast. Ole Ochoro's 48 sons and 56 daughters, some of them married, had organized this feast to say 'THANKS' to their father and their 9 Mothers! All the children and grandchildren with the elderly from the neighbourhood were invited for the feast. We all ate and drank water, soda or home-brew beer. Speeches were made and presents exchanged. This was another new experience for us! A long line of the 500 visitors was made and all the guests were greeted individually, going around a big wide circle. The women and the older girls looked marvellous in their traditional dress. One had to be there in order to appreciate it. This is what I call a rich posterity! When I was first there, I travelled each weekend back to Ngong Road (the Provincial House in Nairobi), then on Monday generally I was at Olchoro Onyore, Bethany House. The Provincial had



Fr. Rini and his co-pupils

asked me to keep the house and make contact with the Maasai. It was fun meeting with the old Man, Gakuyia Nteeyia. When he called in, with his family, he would take me with "our" car all around wherever there was a gathering of people or of cattle. He loved this, as did I, arriving by car and getting around when there was a birth celebration, a circumcision ceremony, a funeral or a marriage, marrying a first

or second wife. It was getting to know one another. Eating with them. Meat! The best of BBQ meat! And the best for me was joining in with the kids in the nursery school. Their mothers as teachers trying to teach me and 15-20 toddlers Maa, the language of the Maasai, I must say that the Nilotic language did not fit my brains anymore! That is hard to accept but the old man Gakuyia and some of his kids helped me. The late afternoons were the ideal time to see the cattle coming in and being separated, entering the different kraals, sheep, goats and cows, each to their different homes. What amazed me most was how the rains decide the well-being of both the Maasai and their cattle. The grass is there

or not, as the water is available or not. That is where we came in with our water, brought in through plastic pipes from a farm with a borehole 3 kms. away. Now "we", the Missionaries, would like to drill our own borehole for a Prayer Centre and at the same time for the Masaai and their cattle. Perhaps even some dams. The drought can be so devastating that the cows not finding grass, become weak, literally drop off the cliff into the riverbed and break their necks. The kids who are learning how



to milk have difficulty getting milk even from the goats and sheep. No grass, no milk, no tea. The cattle have to walk miles and miles, with their herders, searching for water. It is the same for the kids and their mothers for washing themselves and their clothes.

Lighting a fire to cook the meat

clan. That is the Gakuyia; so I always greet them in their own language instead of Swahili as a sign of respect. Their life seems very patriarchal. All the decisions are settled by the father of the house. It is very Old Testament!

The Maasai are proud, but not arrogant. They are kind and extremely trustworthy, as long as one is on good terms with the father of the

When "we" were there, there was no Church but I hear that the different Bishops of Ngong diocese have insisted on young non-Maasai priests using the Maa language when approaching the Maasai. The Bishop even gave them a 3 months course in learning this how to greet and keeping up a conversation. A very good way of respecting one another. Some do better than others. There are some Masaai priests and sisters. But I hear that in the diocesan seminaries of Kenya there is less of a missionary spirit. That is a pity. Here among the Masaai the smell of the cattle could energise the Church!



150 Years of Mission

On 9th. December 2018 the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, assembled in the church of Our Lady, Queen of Apostles, Heston together with friends, family and well-wishers to celebrate 150 years of Mission. Heston community and the Vocation Fathers kindly agreed to host the celebration because of the many years association with our congregation. Earlier in the year there had been a celebration in Rutherglen, Scotland and now it was the turn of London. The Mass celebrated was the Mass of the Immaculate Conception since in 1878 our founder placed the two congregations of African missionaries under the patronage and protection of the Immaculate Conception. We began with an introduction by Sr. Maria Carmen, MSOLA from the



Sr. Maria Carmen Ocon

General Council in Rome. Here is an extract from her speech: It is a great joy for me to welcome you all today as we gather to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of our two institutes the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Especially I would like to welcome and thank Bishop Wilson for having accepted to preside our celebration.

Our birth took place in Algiers, under the inspiration of Bishop Charles Martial Lavigerie, then Bishop of Algiers, who needed help in his pastoral care of the diocese and especially among the Muslims. We remember that yesterday in Algeria 19 martyrs were beatified and among them were four Missionaries of Africa. However, from the beginning, Lavigerie had a much wider vision and saw Algiers as a door that opened onto the whole African continent. Our origins were a huge invitation. In 1868 and 1869 the first



Bp. Wilson begins the Mass



MSOLA community of Ealing

candidates, men and women, arrived in Algiers. They had heard the invitation to be apostles, to be followers of Jesus sent in his name. They responded to an intuition, without any assurance that it was possible, nor any way of knowing where it would lead them. This intuition and invitation continue to shape our lives today:

they are an on-going call to be co-creators with God in building a world that is according to God's desire for all people. In this Eucharist, this great act of thanksgiving, we remember with gratitude our common founder, Cardinal Lavigerie, and Mother Marie Salomé, who was the co-founder for us, the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. We also praise the Lord for the lives of all the Missionaries of Africa, priests and Brothers, and the Sisters who have responded to this invitation by giving their lives each day until the end. This day of celebration serves to remind us of the 'pearl of great price' which we found when we heard and responded to the call to be with Christ and to follow him by remaining always faithful to Africa and to the African world. Very present in our thoughts today are all the peoples, and especially the individual people, who have welcomed us throughout these 150 years. We thank God for their generosity and trust in helping us to discover the riches of their cultures, their languages and their customs, which opened us up to wider horizons, and for having shared the secrets of their relationship with God, who is the



Fr. Gerard Chabanon

unseen and infinite. We take this opportunity to ask for their forgiveness if at times we judged their manners and cultures with a narrow mentality that is incompatible with the spirit of Jesus. Also included in this celebration are all our families, friends, collaborators and benefactors from the four continents from which our members come - Africa, America, Asia and Europe. We are



London Congolese Choir

a passion for Christ and a passion for hu-
 manity. We choose again to follow what our founder so often repeated: “Be apostles, nothing but apostles.” United with others, we want to contribute our part, however humble, to building a more just and loving world. With this in view, we will continue to help in building bridges between religions and between cultures, among very diverse peoples. We commit ourselves to paying special attention to those who are on the peripheries of our societies and to building a more inclusive future for all. We desire to live what Jesus taught us, and do so with him: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me. He has sent me to proclaim good news to the poor, to heal those who are heartbroken, to proclaim liberty to the captive and new sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and proclaim the Lord’s year of grace.” (Luke 4:18-19) Then we began the Mass with Bp. Wilson greeting all those present, including the many missionary priests and sisters of other congregations who had come to rejoice with us. After the Readings from the Word of God, Fr. Gérard Chabanon, Provincial of the European Province, shared a few thoughts on the history and focus of the Missionaries of Africa and Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa from their foundation up to the present time. Here are a few of his reflections: “What was the special purpose of these two foundations? Working for the non-Christian people of Africa! Nothing more and nothing less. This was to be achieved by coming close to the locals by learning their language, by dressing like them, by eating the same food, and so imitating Saint Paul who writes: “I have become all things to all people, that by all

very grateful to them all. To-day, you here present are the representatives of the whole Church, and we ask you to be witnesses as we promise to continue to be apostles, to let ourselves be sent, and to live the present with passion,



Congolese Choir Dancers



Fr. Augustine Sawadogo
explaining the Gifts

those in the African world who have not heard the Good News of the Gospel (without neglecting the Christians). And it means encountering God with a new spirituality, prepared for, at length by a specifically missionary formation based on discernment and commitment. So cathedrals have been built by our brothers, long tours in the villages, hours spent in the confessional, in the classrooms or in the dispensaries, White Fathers and White Sisters were ardent missionaries, devoted and charitable, never counting their hours of work. But to meet the other person, with their differences, of culture, of language, of religion, is to go beyond our ready-made ideas, our prejudices. It involves the risk of being thrown off balance - like Paul on the road to Damascus –meeting realities we were not at all expecting. To meet others means adopting a simpler way of life and a more open way of being. The mission continues in Africa but also in the “African world” in Europe and elsewhere. We have founded communities in Liverpool in UK in Berlin and Karlsruhe in Germany, in Marseille and Toulouse in France and in Almeiria in Spain. All these missionary commitments are directed towards the “African world”, the migrants and the Muslims. We need young men and women to join us in promoting this missionary spirit; we need also Church leaders, clergy and lay faithful to support us. I must admit that this support has been tremendous all these years making us feel that we are one Church, a Missionary

means I might have save some.” (1 Cor 9: 22). The essential aim was, and is, the evangelisation of Africa and the African world. It is the missionary charism that Cardinal Lavigerie bequeathed to the Church and to our Institutes. This mission is threefold. It means leaving home, family and culture. It means reaching out to



Offertory Gifts

Church. Today, most of our candidates come from Africa. This corresponds to the vision of our founder. Indeed, we believe that intercultural and fraternal communities of missionaries are a beautiful, a meaningful sign and witness for our world today. So we keep welcoming young men and women ready to serve in the African world.”



Percussion section

people of Africa have shared with us, both physical and spiritual helping us to serve the mission of Jesus Christ. Finally there was the bread and wine, to be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, just as God has transformed our human efforts of 150 years into a true evangelisation. The gifts were brought up by members of our congregations, by members of our families and by friends. All one in the Eucharist, the Thanksgiving. Throughout the Mass we were helped in our celebration by the choir of Our Lady, Queen of Apostles, Heston and by the Congolese Chaplaincy Choir. The Congolese Choir also brought along with them a group of little girls who danced during the processions and gave an added touch of Africa to our celebration.

After the Mass we all went next door to the church hall to share some food and drink arranged by the ladies of the parish. Many thanks to all those who made the day a success Bp. Wilson, the choirs, those who worked behind the scenes and all those who supported us by their prayers and presence.

At the Offertory Procession gifts were brought up representing the Founders (Cardinal Lavigerie and Mother Salome) under the protection of Our Lady Queen of Africa, a candle representing the Light of the Gospel, a wooden map of Africa and fruits representing the nourishment that the



Thanking the dancers

WAYS TO HELP FUND OUR MISSION

WHITE FATHERS

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"I give to the **Society of the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)** the sum of free of duty, and I declare that the receipt of the Father Treasurer of the Society in Great Britain, who now resides at 64, Little Ealing Lane, London, W5 4XF, shall be of good discharge."

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Parents & Friends Association

EVENTS

Friday 22 March 7.30pm: Bingo Evening

***Sunday 5 May 12.00 Rutherglen,
Mass for Deceased White Fathers and members of P&F
Association: 2pm Buffet at Rutherglen.***

Friday 17th May 7.30pm Bingo Evening

***Sunday 25 August 12.00 Rutherglen, Mass for Annual
Gathering of P&F Association: 2pm Lunch at King's
Park Hotel***

Friday 6 September 7.30pm Bingo Evening

Friday 8 November 7.30pm Bingo Evening

Your charitable prayers are requested

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



James Peter Cosgrove	Cheadle Hulme
Mrs. Ruth Black	Tamworth
Mrs. Dora Carver	Orpington
Thomas Noonan	Derby
Mrs. P. Reynolds	Cheshire
Tom Cassidy	Milton of Campsie, Glasgow
John Prythergch	Woodditton, Newmarket
Brian Donnelly	Co. Tyrone
Mrs. Hilda Tyerman	Blackhill, Consett
Robert Harman	Sevenoaks
Thomas William Airey	Newcastle upon Tyne
Dr. R.G. Weeder	Stoke on Trent
Mrs. Ruth Black	Tamworth
Michael Mullane	

May they rest in peace



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LONDON W5 2HP

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White Fathers in England & Wales:
Registered Charity No. 233302
Charity Registered in Scotland No. SC037981

ISSN 0262-1061 Issue No.440

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Find out more about us at:

www.missionariesofafrica.org.uk

Gift aid form available on our **website**

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White Fathers in England & Wales
Registered Charity No. 233302
Charity Registered in Scotland No. SCO37981 ISSN 0262-1061

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