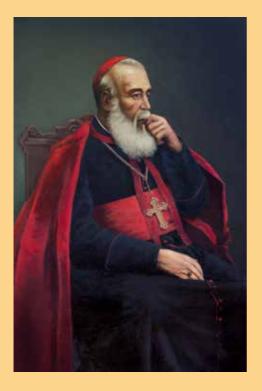
# MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS))



Fitzgerald 2019

Lavigerie 1868



# And the Míssíon goes on **November 2019**

Issue No. 445



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**Correction:** In the last magazine it was stated that the church on the front page was the Cathedral in Carthage, Tunisia. In fact it is the Basillica in Algiers, Algeria. Ed.

# Editor's Word

The Holy Father writes, "For the month of October 2019, I have asked that the whole Church revive her missionary awareness and commitment... (I) realize once again the importance of renewing the Church's missionary commitment and giving fresh ... impulse to her work of preaching and bringing to the world the salvation of Jesus Christ, who died and rose again...



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

Baptized and Sent: The Church of Christ on Mission in the World. Celebrating this month will help us first to rediscover the missionary dimension of our faith in Jesus Christ, a faith graciously bestowed on us in baptism. Our ... relationship with God is not something simply private, but always in relation to the Church. Through our communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we, together with so many of our other brothers and sisters, are born to new life. This divine life is not a product for sale – we do not practise proselytism - but a treasure to be given, communicated and proclaimed: that is the meaning of mission. We received this gift freely and we share it freely, without excluding anyone. God wills that all people be saved by coming to know the truth and experiencing his mercy through the ministry of the Church, the universal sacrament of salvation." Pope Francis' words sum up what it means to be a Christian. Baptised and Sent. We are all (men, women, elderly, chldren, laity, clergy, healthy, ailing) given the Holy Spirit, so that as a child of God we may invite all people to become Children of God. By our interactions with others, in no matter how small a way, we are called to show our trusting relationship with God as his daughters and sons. Sometimes this is recognised and accepted by others. Sometimes this is noticed and violently rejected by others. In making cardinals the Pope reminds them, as he gives them their blood red hats, that they must remain faithful even to the shedding of their blood. In some parts of the world ordinary people are called to make that sacrifice. Total trust, faithful unto death. In the month of November we remember all our loved ones who have died in this relationship with Christ. We pray for them and place our trust in the God who is always faithful.

# The Cardinal Dies

(The final part of an article by Fr. Frank Nolan, MAfr on the Life and Work of Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, Founder of the White Fathers and White Sisters)

As the White Fathers' missions and the White Sisters' convents spread, so missionary candidates were recruited from more countries and the societies became more international in character. In the beginning, all the members of the Societies were French but within a few years Lavigerie



Caravan to Nyassa 1898

was writing, "I see names from Holland, Belgium and Germany among you, but you must have a single heart. I will not keep a single one of you who does not have a fraternal love for all members of the Society regardless of his national origin. My ambition is that in

speaking of your little Society, the most humble and recent of missionary societies, one should say at least that it is Catholic par excellence." International communities have remained a distinctive characteristic of the White Fathers and Sisters to the present day. No single national culture or tradition dominates the life of a community or the method of apostolate. Every member contributes from the richness of his own background.



Unusual mode of transport



White Sister on a camel

A capital point in the rule that Lavigerie gave the White Fathers concerned community life. Missionaries should always be at least three in a post, praying and working together. He promised that no missionary would die alone, perhaps hundreds of miles from his confreres As a former student and teacher of church history, Lavigerie was familiar with

the methods in the early Church of preparing adults for baptism. In his Instructions of 1879, he told his missionaries to revive the ancient but forgotten discipline of the catechumenate – a system which has since spread back to many parishes in Europe. Lavigerie insisted that new

Christians should be well educated in the Christian faith and should live a moral and Christian life before baptism. Preparation for baptism should take at least four years. The foundations of the Church should not be constructed of weak Christians who might soon fall away.



Camels, horses and bullocks don't get punctures !

#### Last years

This article is too short to relate all the achievements of Lavigerie. When his missionaries reported that the slave trade, long abolished

across the Atlantic, still flourished in the Congo and East Africa, he led a campaign to extinguish it, touring capitals of Europe including London. The Third Republic in France was strongly anti-Catholic so that Catholics who had hoped for a restoration of the monarchy after the Franco-Prussian war of 1871 refused to get involved in it. Pope Leo thought this politically unwise and asked Lavigerie to act as his spokesman to publicly and outspokenly oppose it. Lavigerie aroused great enmity among many of his supporters as a result, but for him obedience to the Holy Father was an abso-



More reliable transport

lute. His phenomenal working capacity kept up to eight secretaries busy but also wore him out before his time. He was only sixty eight when he died in 1892.

He spent his last week in the Africa he loved. "I have loved everything in Africa, its past, its present, its pure sky, its sun, the long desert horizons, the blue waves which bathe its shores." As he lay dying in his simply furnished bedroom at Algiers, he could see through the window the great church of Our Lady of Africa which he had built. He would say his rosary with his eyes fixed on the Church gleaming in the sunlight. On the 22nd November 1892 he sent for the White Father seminarians and spoke to them for the last time. "My dear sons, love the good God always." Three days later he could not speak at all but, fully



**Prayer must be the centre of mission anywhere** conscious, he joined silently in the prayers as he was anointed for the last time. Soon after midnight he died, worn out by his great labours for Africa. When Pope Leo heard the news, he said, "I loved him like a brother, as Peter loved Andrew." His body was taken to Carthage where it lay in state. A hundred thousand people, Christians, Muslims and Jews, filed past in a last tribute. He was finally laid to rest in the tomb he had prepared for himself. Chiselled in stone above him was the epitaph he had composed:

#### Here, in the hope of infinite mercy, lies Charles Lavigerie. Once Cardinal Priest, Archbishop of Carthage and Algiers, Primate of Africa, now dust. Pray for him.

But Cardinal Lavigerie's work was also Christ's and it has lived on through his missionary sons and daughters. When he died, there were two hundred and thirty-five White Fathers and ninety-six White Sisters. Over the years they grew to number thousands, following the example of his great zeal, spreading the good news of Christ in Africa. "I am the servant of a master whom no one can enclose in a tomb."

# A Cardinal Created

On 5th October 2019 Archbishop Michael Louis Fitzgerald, MAfr.



Titular Bishop of Nepte was created Cardinal Deacon by Pope Francis with as his titular church Sancta Maria in Portico in Rome. This was the culmination (so far) of a life of service, obedience and openness that has characterised Michael's life of 82 years (so far).

He was born in Walsall, in the English Midlands in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, on 17th August 1937.

The next significant date given in his Curriculum Vitae is his

ordination to the priesthood on 3rd February 1961 as a member of the White Fathers/Society of Missionaries of Africa. But during his journey to the priesthood he had studied at the Priory (White Fathers Junior

Seminary), Philosophy in Scotland and England, Novitiate in the Netherlands (s'Heerenberg), and Theology at Carthage (Tunisia), returning for priestly ordination at St. Mary Magdalene parish, Whetstone in North London.

Immediately after ordination he was sent to the Gregorian in Rome to take his Doctorate in Theology (Thesis: The Missionary Intention of the Latin Apologists).



**Archbishop Michael** 



On finishing his studies in Rome in 1965 he went on to study Arabic at the School of African and Oriental Studies in London. This gave the direc-

Ordaining younger confreres as deacons

tion to all his future life which was to be oriented towards Arabs and the Muslims World.

Back to Rome he joined the staff of the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies. The PISAI, as it was known was at that time in the hands of the Missionaries of Africa preparing missionaries who would work in Muslim countries by giving them a deep knowledge and appreciation of the Qur'an and Muslim thought. Michael was officially there from 1968 until 1978, however between 1969 and 1971

he was seconded to the Department of Religious Studies in Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. There he taught the Qur'an to both Christian and Muslim students.

Michael finished his time in Rome 1971-78 as Director of PISAI.



**Celebrating 50 years of priesthood** 

In 1978 he was at last appointed to parish ministry in New Halfa, Su-



dan. This town replaced the original Halfa which had been covered by the waters of the Assuan Dam But this pastoral work was not to last. In 1980 he was elected to the General Council of the Missionaries of Africa and

With friends and colleagues at Heythrop College

spent the next 6 years working from Rome.

Once he had completed his term as Assistant on the General Council, in 1987 he was appointed Secretary of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, which later became the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. In fact, in 2002 he became President of this Pontifical Council. As President, he was closely involved in the preparations for the Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer for Peace and Justice in Assisi on 27th October 2011 (nicknamed the Peace Train after the well-known song by Cat Stevens/Yusuf Islam). This was just 25 years since the first World Day

of Peace in Assisi called by St John Paul II. It was a day when leaders of all religious beliefs and none came together to reflect on Peace and Justice in the world.

Just after this, in 2012, the Holy Father appointed him as Papal Nuncio (Ambassador) in Egypt and Delegate to the League of Arab States.



Ordinations at St. Anne's, Jerusalem

In 2012, Michael resigned and took up residence in St Anne's, Jerusalem. St Anne's is situated in the Old City of Jerusalem and was for many years the seminary run by the Missionaries forming candidates for the priesthood in the Melchite (Greek Catholic) rite. The candidates came from Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. This was no longer possible after the 6 Day War in 1967, so St Anne's was transformed into a centre for spiritual renewal for missionaries, religious and clergy from Africa.



It is also a centre for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue. In later years it also became a house of formation for Missionary of Africa students of

My goodness me. Why what was that?

Theology.

In 2012 a team of Missionaries of Africa was formed for interreligious outreach in the centre of Liverpool. The team consisted of 3 priests (English, Dutch and Kenyan) and 1 archbishop (Michael Fitzgerald who volunteered for this insertion into the parish of St Vincent). The team now consists of 3 priests and a cardinal, who all take their turns at the parish duties and chores.

It would be possible to continue the list of Cardinal Michael's other appointments to various committees, commissions and councils but it might be better to mention some of the awards which recognise the work he has done to bring people of different faiths together, not believing the same thing but beginning to understand and to respect one another. He has been made an Officer of the Legion of Honour, Honorary Chaplain of the Order of Malta. He was awarded an honorary Doctorate by the Australian Catholic University and another Honorary Doctorate by Heythrop College, London.

Cardinal Fitzgerald has published many papers and books over the years on Spiritualty and Dialogue, too numerous to mention here, but it would be good to finish this article by returning to the start. Ten years before he was raised to the dignity of Archbishop in 2002, he was ordained Bishop of Nepte. Nepte is his titular see. It was an ancient diocese until the seventh century in Tunisia (now Nefta) but there have been no Christians there since 1194. However it is interesting to note that Nefta is considered by most Sufis to be the spiritual home of Sufism, a mystical branch



**Relaxing with confreres in London** 

of Islam, whose adherents show particular modesty of behaviour and asceticism. They are inclined to mysticism, spiritual contemplation and meditation and venerate holy men.

We pray for our confrere, Cardinal Deacon, Archbishop and missionary priest, that he may be a holy man worthy of veneration and as the Holy Father insisted during his homily, a man who has felt compassion from his Lord, and so is able to offer it to others.

# Plastic sheets

This Magazine is meant primarily for giving a few glimpses of the work of the Missionaries of Africa, past and present. However, a reader sent £200 recently to be used as I saw fit, so I sent the money to Fr. Peter Ekutt, MAfr, a confrere in the Congo. This excerpt from his letter of thanks describes a particularly difficult situation in his parish, so I include it. Editor



One of the villages in Fr. Peter's parish

The money was used to provide shelter to displaced people in the refugee camp of Mahagi where I do my pastoral work. I would like to thank you for helping our brothers and sisters who are living in a refugee camp here. The situation of the displaced people is dire.



Blue plastic sheeting put to good use



**Plastic sheeting spread** 

More than 1.5 million Congolese have lost their homes through conflict and tribal war, especially in the Eastern part of Congo where I am working. Displaced by ongo-

ing attacks here in Ituri Province, many families now live in makeshift shelters made of banana leaves and raffia bags. Others have used palm branches to make their shelter. But these are not waterproof. When the rains come, living conditions in the shelters are horrible. Plastic sheet-

ing keeps out the worst. At times we find six to seven people in one shelter that was foreseen for three people. These families, having fled with many others, trying to escape the unrelenting conflict in Njugu and Mahagi, now live in areas far from the homes they have known.

On one of my visits to one of the camps for the displaced of Mahagi, on the shore of Lake Albert, we saw villages, where about half of the houses were destroyed. But in other villages, further away from the lake, absolutely everything was destroyed. Nothing left, nothing!

Jeanne, 39, fled her village in Djugu territory in Ituri province earlier this year in February, together with her family.



**Plastic sheets** 

She shares a tent with 6 children in a displacement site in Mahagi. She shared her story with me, weeping:

"Our house was burnt to the ground. We saw it behind us as we were fleeing. We heard gunshots and fled but by then they had killed my husband. They looted our home and burnt it down."

Mungufeni, a displaced boy of 19 years also told me how he survived and managed to find himself at the camp: "*Armed men broke the windows of our house and started chopping off the heads of people in the* 



Fr. Peter Ekutt, MAfr, from Nigeria

neighborhood. My Dad, my Mum and my elder brothers were killed. I was in school when I heard the story. I could not go back. I have not buried any of them," says Mugufeni in tears.

We saw entire villages having been reduced to ashes. An estimated 55,000 houses have been destroyed or damaged due to conflict. In Ituri, in recent weeks there have been renewed attacks by unidentified assailants on military positions and civilians. I remember these small villages where everything now has disappeared. The attackers also destroyed the entire basic infrastructure; the school buildings, the health posts are gone. These means no more schooling for many of the kids. Many have lost their parents and are now with relatives in the camp. We try to arrange some classes for kids as you can see in one the photos (kids in class greeting me on my arrival to help out). We are in the grip of armed and ethnic conflict. The peace accord signed between the three ethnic

groups the Hema, the Lendu, and the Alur offers little hope of achieving comprehensive peace, as not all groups and organizations have acknowledged the agreement. The root causes of the conflict still persist: land disputes, inadequate access to natural resources and the abuse of human rights, which have taken the lives of at least 220,000 people.

The consequences of this are insecurity, loss of life and property. Many people cannot go back to their villages. They prefer to stay in the refugee camps like in Mahagi and on the outskirts of large cities. There are many kids in this camp who have nothing to eat. Most of these illegal slum suburbs have little access to public utilities or state services.



Children greeting Fr. Peter when he comes to visit

Very few people receive adequate psychosocial support to help them cope with the traumatic experiences they have had, and they lack the self-confidence needed to secure new employment. Many of these displaced people get by as street vendors or through odd jobs on the informal labour market. They make small stalls around themselves selling whatever they can to scrape together the necessary for food and money.

Fr. Peter Ekutt MAfr.

# Cleaning the Basilica

The idea had been trotting around in the heads and the conversations of the White Fathers of the Basilica for months. We could see that the surroundings of the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, one of the most visited places in Algiers, was becoming more and more dirty. Finally, encouraged by what we have seen happening elsewhere, we put out an invitation to all citizens of good will to spend a few hours helping us clean the place up. We put out messages on the social networks. To be honest we did not know how many people might come. We were slightly anxious, to say the least!



Starting on the clean-up of the Basilica

On August 31, at 7:30 a.m., the first three volunteers arrived on their bikes from Dely Ibrahim. Little by little, in dribs and drabs, other people trickled in: couples, families, groups of friends, work colleagues, people on their own. I saw Algerians, Poles, Malians, Burkinabes, Bra-



**Everyone mucking in! Some more than others?** 

zilians, French, Ghanaians, Mexicans, Spaniards. The police and the services from the town hall (NetCom) were present. Even some tourists who had only come sightseeing were caught up in something they were

not expecting. There was even a reporter from the telly ... Chinese!

We issued safety instructions, gloves, rubbish bags (partly supplied NetCom) and everyone was assigned their area. From time to time someone would



Selfie with the rubbish

shout. "Time for a breather? Anyone need cold water?" This was fortunate because the heat was intense. We worked in good spirits for two and a half hours, getting to know one another, sweating, and taking pride in contributing to the beauty of the place!

A whistle was blown to signal the end of the work. Everyone gathered together so that we could say, "Thank you for coming to make this place beautiful again. The fact that most of you are Muslims who came to take care of a Christian church is a beautiful act. God created nature beautiful, as believers we must keep it so. Thank you for coming!" We



Who would have believed it?

took some photos in front of "the fruit of our labour and the sweat of our brows". We were very surprised that in just two hours we had collected so much litter! We made sure we could provide cakes, both sweet and savoury as well as tea and coffee for the more than 70 people who stayed until the end. It allowed us to get our strength back and make new friends. For some people it was their first time of coming to the basilica and so we ended the morning with a "guided" tour. We are infinitely

grateful to all who made this day possible. The ideal would be not to need to clean it again, but if it is necessary, now we know that we can count on the many friends of the Basilica.

Peter-Claver KOGH (Ghana) and José M. CANTAL (Spain) White Fathers at the Basilica.

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN TANZANIA

Br. Elvis Ng'andwe MAfr



Br. Elvis speaks out to anyone, anywhere, anytime

Human trafficking and forced prostitution are very rife in cities in Tanzania. Among the main challenges facing our office of Justice and Peace and social concern is this widespread human trafficking. Usually the problem of human trafficking is cross border, international human trafficking, although there is intra-state human trafficking (in other words within the state). Our biggest challenge here is intra-state human trafficking, often resulting from the people attempting to move from rural 20



Speaking in a Health Centre

to urban areas.

After lengthy discussions between the local government and our office of Justice and Peace, we decided to engage on sensitising the local communities on human trafficking. We focus on the possibilities of rescuing victims and we give training to local peo-

ple helping them to identify and rescue victims of human trafficking.

#### **Basically our work involves:**

1. Identifying and rescuing victims of human trafficking.



2. Training local community leaders to help us in eradicating human trafficking.

3. Networking with other partners and local communities.

4. Counselling and health care for the victims.

Speaking to schoolgirls of all religions5. Life skills for the victims during rehabilitation.



Speaking to Christian religious leaders

6. Running community outreach programs to sensitize the local communities about the problem of human trafficking.

7. Family reunification services.

8. Follow-ups on the reintegration of former victims when they have completed their rehabilitation program.

We have since conducted several outreach programs in different places. The main event was held at uwanja wa fisi, meaning "the field of the hyena". This is a place where a lot of brothels are to be found. This place has been a centre for prostitution, human trafficking, drug abuse and all sorts of deviant behaviour which are often interconnected. We were there with loud



Warning schoolchildren



Speaking to Youth leaders

speakers and music and we were heartened to see that a huge crowd 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 something to help. The message was passed through different means including music and drama. This is part of the strategic plan for creating awareness on human trafficking. To our greatest surprise what we saw it was not only young adults engaged in prostitution, but also teenagers. It was sad and appalling to see future leaders forced into prostitution. After talking with some of the victims and their neighbours, and then conducting our own private investigations, we realised that some of them especially the teenagers had been deceived and been lured into prostitution. But once in, it was very difficult to get out.

Victims of human trafficking are not willing to come forward because there is stigma attached to trafficked people and their families. Many other people are simply not aware of human trafficking and exploitation going on within Tanzania.

However, our outreach has begun to bear fruit. We have received an overwhelming number of phone calls from different victims and whistleblowers. We seek your prayers for the victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution. Every day we go to the field, we realise that what we are up against 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.

#### Martyrs in Nigeria

Cyprian Aondoer Chia is a student of Theology in Abidjan preparing for ordination as a Missionary of Africa. Greatly moved by the death of some of his compatriots at Mass recently, he wrote me a heartfelt letter. The letter was long and theological so, with his permission, I have included the gist of his letter in our Magazine. Ed.



Father Joseph Gor



Martyrdom according to Catholicism is "the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death." The terrible challenge of martyrdom in Christendom lies in the unwillingness for self-sacrifice, in other words, the fear of death which is absolutely the lack of faith for us Christians. In other words our Faith tells us to have trust in God and that dying for the Truth is good, yet humanly speaking this is very difficult, be it in extreme situations where we are faced with death or in everyday life where we have to make moral choices which are uncomfortable.

"The more we are hewn down, the more numerous do we become. The blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians!" Was a claim put out in the first centuries of the Church. We believe it, but faced with persecution and rejection throughout the world, there is sometime a sneaking suspicion that we are "losing" to more forceful and violent people.

**Father Felix Tyolaha, vc** On April 22, 2018, the Catholic church in Mbalom, Makurdi, Nigeria was invaded by "Fulani herdsmen", and the people of God, Fathers Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha and some of their congregation paid the supreme price with their lives. They died while celebrating the Holy Eucharist. The celebration had barely started and suddenly, there was a sounds of rapid gunshots and "people started scampering and wailing, 19 persons, including Rev. Frs. Joseph Gor and Felix Tyolaha, who were celebrating the morning Mass were gunned down in cold blood, while many sustained injuries, including bullet

wounds". What a payback for the Nigerian Catholic family which has contributed so much towards peace and development of our country! We are saddened by this lack of security and the attacks on innocent people. Yet we believe these martyrs died holding Christ himself in their hands; they were announcing the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ through the Holy Mass. But where was God? Why allow this? Does God even exist? Yes, God isn't responsible for the death, suffering, pain, disease, and brokenness we see around us. The "problem of pain" doesn't rest on God. It was human beings who did this. So was their death the consequence of their sins? No, God entered this world and experienced the most painful death, by crucifixion. God has not remained distant from our human suffering but has become part of it. The life of each creature is precious in the eyes of God despite our sins and disobedience. We are loved sinners created in the likeness and image of God. No matter what we do, His image is still present in us. We are like God, and that likeness means that human life is always to be treated with dignity and respect. That is why, anything that is against the



sanctity of life is an evil, against human dignity. For this, we condemn utterly the brutal murder of our brothers and sisters in Mbalom or anywhere else, because only God is the author of life- the giver and the

Grieving mourners at the funeral of the martyrs taker of life.

Finally, we rejoice that these martyrs are witnesses for the Church, serving as an encouragement to us. But their commitment should not only be remembered, it should be honoured. Let them be recognized as "Martyrs of faith in the Nigerian Catholic Family". Their lives and their death is a victory over death. "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? …thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:54–57).

#### 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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The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) is a registered charity in England and Wales No. 233302 and in Scotland No. SC037981.



# Parents & Friends Association EVENTS

The Annual Parents and Friends Association on the last Sunday of August was marked by the attendance of Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald who presided at the Mass and Bishop Joseph Toal who joined us for the celebratory meal in the nearby hotel.

In all there were 50 members of the Parents and Friends Association. We were all very pleased to learn of Archbishop Michael's elevation to Cardinal, particularly as he had just been to our community.

The Parents and Friends Association will resume their funding activities in the New Year.

Fr. Donald McLeod MAfr

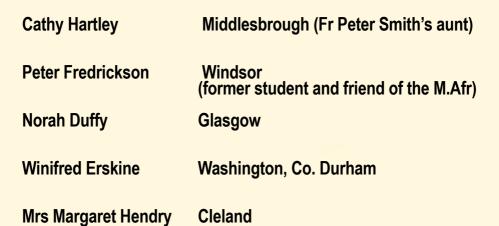
# Your charitable prayers are requested

for those who have recently died

and our deceased parents, relatives, friends and benefactors.







Please let us know if you wish us to incude the names of your deceased friends or relatives in the Magazine



### May they rest in peace



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Donor's Details: Title: Mr / Mrs / Miss / Ms / Other (please state):

Address 1.....

Address 2: .....

Postcode:....

Signature:....

Date:....

By signing this declaration, you agree to your details being held securely by the Society

of Missionaries of Africa and being sent electronically to HMRC. They will be used for processing Gift Aid and for no other purpose, apart from informing an individual you

wish to benefit as and when you send a restricted donation. Your details will be retained for as long as required under the relevant Finance Act.

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