

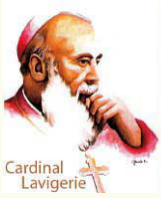
MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

(WHITE FATHERS)



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Mary
Queen Of Africa
Pray for Us.
Missionaries Of Africa



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All we can do is to follow in his footsteps, "Love one another as I have loved you", "Do this in memory of me". Fr. Dennis is right to sit on the lava mound smiling. The World can do its worst but as long as we care for one another in small things or in big things, in imitation of our Redeemer, we will live. "Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ".

Editor's Word

“It never rains but it pours”.

“Never two deaths without three”.

There are lots of phrases about how bad things seem to come all at once. We have only to look at the Book of Job in the Bible. Job is a rich man with a big and happy family. Everything is going well for him, then suddenly everything falls apart. His money goes. His children die. His health fails and the few “friends” he has left are true “Job’s comforters”. Nothing makes sense, yet Job holds on. “I know that my Redeemer lives”, he is heard to say. The picture on the front of this issue of the Magazine reminded me of Job.



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

Fr. Dennis, a Nigerian Missionary of Africa, is sitting on a mound of recently cooled lava which has destroyed the lives and livelihoods of many people in Congo. How can he sit there smiling? Surely, if this lava means anything it is that we are all at the “mercy” of unthinking and uncontrollable forces? In this magazine today we have terrible examples in Africa of ordinary people at the “mercy” of pitiless, evil, selfish people, be it big companies, politicians, religious or racial fanatics. The volcano killed and displaced so many and even the Government seems helpless, yet people begin to help their brothers and sisters in whatever way they can to start again. This is what we mean by human resilience. Amongst the survivors of a disaster we help one another.

Some people are blinded by greed or selfishness or fear or ideologies and in their blindness behave like the lava, unseeing, uncaring, destroying life. Others pick themselves up and try to pick up those around them because they see them as brothers and sisters. They see that as human beings we are all connected. I don't just need others to help me physically or economically. I need others to care for and for them to care for me so that I can feel that I am a human being. Jesus Christ died on the cross, a victim of politics, fears, racial and religious intolerance, entrenched power. He overcame all of these by rising from the dead, yet all of these evils still blight the earth and threaten to overcome us. **(Contd. Page 2)**

Calvary for the People of Mahagi

by Eliezer W. Pithua

(A few magazines ago Fr. Peter Ekutt MAfr wrote articles for us. One concerned the refugees in his parish in Congo, and another was about the plight of prisoners, again in his parish. A short time ago, he was transferred to Belgium and he put me in contact with the youth group who are continuing the work. This is a brief explanation of their work by Eliezer, a local university student in Mahagi, originally written in French). (Editor)



Team of young volunteers beside the floods on Lake Albert

Welcome to Mahagi in the Province of Ituri in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are just 2 degrees North of the Equator and surrounded by other Congolese provinces, except to the East where we border Uganda and Lake Albert (named in Belgian colonial times).



Refugee children without homes, food or security

The year 2017 saw terrible upheavals in Djigu, the province just to the South of us. These consisted of violent attacks on villages and towns, widespread burning of homes resulting in deaths, wounded, and very large numbers of people fleeing their homes. The ones who were attacking these defenceless civilians, men, women and children, go under the apparently harmless name of **The Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO)**. They started out as a sort of self-help group for a particular ethnic group of (mainly) farmers called the Lendi, but have morphed into a semi-religious militia group, associated with terrible atrocities in North-East Congo.



Preparing the ground for shelters

Thousands of people fled from them and very many of these refugees escaped North to Mahagi and its environs, since all was peaceful here. True, they found peace, but they had lost their homes, their



Arranging access roads to the camp

livelihoods, everything which made up their lives, schools, clinics, churches, shops/markets, even shelter from the sun and rain. Peace and relative safety, but nothing else. The Government began to take notice of their predicament, but our country is huge and communications and transport not always easy.



Frameworks for refugee huts 5 kms. from Mahagi



Lake Albert floods and people need help

Then came COVID-19. When people fled their homes many children became separated from their parents. How to feed and educate and protect all these lost children? At first, our local families took pity on these incomers. We shared what we had. But slowly as time went on, the local families (who were just about making ends meet themselves) began to resent the newcomers. Our famous African solidarity was breaking down. People who were at first met with sympathy and welcoming smiles, are now faced with pretend concern or silent aggression. So, people who have fled open violence are now met with suspicion, resentment and rejection through no real fault of their own. Lacking families, rejected, mistrusted by their hosts and without hope of real improvement, many young people are turning to crime. It is hardly surprising to see that quite a percentage of our prison population is made up of young refugees. There in prison, conditions can be terrible. Hunger, lack of medical help, torture, bullying, the weakest die. If they serve their terms of imprisonment and are released, what sort of citizens or parents are they likely to make? At the moment of writing this article, it is estimated that there are 2.8 million people in Ituri who

are in urgent need of assistance. Mahagi is no exception. For these people each day is a Calvary. Thus it was that we, a group of young people who meet together here at the Monsignor Marcel Utembi Tapa Centre in Mahagi, decided to see what we could do to improve the situation. We called for help from the local population, particularly from the young, and in 2018 we formed Jeunes Visionnaires pour le Changement (JVC) (*Young People Seeking Change. Ed.*) We decided to focus on refugees, prisoners, elderly people and young jobless. In practice, this meant distributing essential food to all of the above categories. We also arranged for unemployed young people to make anti-Covid masks that we distributed. Then, from donations, we managed to buy rolls of plastic sheeting which refugees could use to cover their makeshift huts, making them waterproof and sheltered from the sun. Finally, we have also managed to get hold of and distribute simple, but essential, tools so that people can start to grow their own food on unused land.



We, the JVC, readily admit that we are only touching the surface of this huge catastrophe, but we refuse to give up on our territory of Mahagi.

VOLCANIC ERUPTION IN CONGO

by Fr. Denis Dashong Pam MAfr



Fr. Dennis on the cooled lava flow in Goma

I am Fr. Dennis Dashong Pam, a Missionary of Africa from Nigeria. I am the Assistant Provincial Superior of the Missionaries of Africa in the Central African Province. This is made up of three countries: The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. I am based in Bukavu, in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo on the border with Rwanda. I was visiting the town of Goma, just before the volcano erupted. I witnessed it, went up closer next day, and as I write this article, I am still there.

Goma is an East Congolese town, like Bukavu, on the border with Rwanda, but at the other end of Lake Kivu. It has sprung up at the foot of Nyiragongo, a volcano which has been active for many, many years. The lava can flow down the side of the volcano towards the town or down one of the other sides, away



People are always ready, alert to the danger

from the town. The last eruption was in 2002 and almost swept away the whole town. Hundreds of people lost their lives and thousands lost their homes, as the lava flowed directly into the town. Some people left the town for good, while others still had the courage to restart life afresh, building homes and businesses from scratch. The face of the town started changing slowly as investors trooped in looking for space to make a living. Life was flourishing and businesses were booming. Things were going along smoothly despite the growing insecurity caused by bandits and rebels hiding in the national park only a few kilometers away. It was there that the Italian Ambassador was assassinated a few months ago. But today, as I write this article, Goma is almost a ghost town. We have just experienced another volcanic eruption followed by a series of terrible earthquakes shaking the earth all around.

It all started on Saturday evening of the 22nd of May 2021 at around 6pm. The first thing we noticed was that the skies became red, as if a fire had broken out somewhere nearby. People guessed what might be happening. Just an hour later, it was clear that it was a volcanic eruption and we could see the lava spouting out of the crater like boiling water in a pot. Before we



First signs of the eruption

realized it, the lava had started flowing down towards the national park in the opposite direction to the town. Unfortunately, a few minutes later, it changed direction towards the town. Then the real panic started, with people desperately trying to evacuate the place. Those living closer to the point of the eruption lost everything. Houses were swallowed up. The water reservoir that normally provided water for that part of the town was burned and covered together with all its pipes, so that now more than half of the town has no water. The lava then blocked a major supply road, cut off the main electricity supply and flattened several villages. Those who could not flee with their loved ones who were sick, old or crippled, had to leave them in their houses and they were swallowed up by the lava. It is estimated that more than 22 people lost their lives. From the official statistics we learn that about 3,500 homes were burnt down, and about 129,000 internally displaced people have had to flee for their lives. We stayed awake the whole night watching the advance of the lava coming down to town towards Goma International Airport. The lava stopped flowing at around 4am on Sunday the 23rd of May 2021, which was the Solemnity of Pentecost. We thanked God.

What followed the next day was a series of earthquakes of very high frequency and intensity. There are cracks everywhere in town. Buildings are falling apart. The roads have deep fissures all along their length. We have been advised to avoid going back



People fleeing in earnest with whatever they could carry

into our homes as much as possible and to stay away from any buildings. Everything has come to a standstill. Shops, markets and schools are closed. As the earthquakes continue in frequency and intensity, we have been told that it is the lava underground that might be seeking other points of eruption in town or from under lake Kivu. This latter could cause a lot more damage since the natural gas in the lake could be ignited.



Cracks in roads

The Government ordered the population to evacuate the town with immediate effect on Thursday morning the 27th of May 2021 to the nearest villages away from town because an even greater disaster seemed imminent. There was panic again in the town. People were running helter-skelter in all directions. Some crossed the border to Rwanda, others took the direction of Rutchuru, and still

others, probably the majority, set off to Sake which is on the road that leads to Bukavu, about 200 kilometers South along the lake.

That leaves us trying to deal with the humanitarian crisis after the eruption. As of now, there are about 400,000 displaced people terribly shocked and living in precarious conditions. They are urgently in need of water, food, shelter, health services and security. The Government, in collaboration with the Church and NGOs, is pulling out all the stops to find an immediate solution to this humanitarian crisis. We are 4 confrères, Missionaries of Africa here in our parish of Notre Dame d'Afrique, Katoy. We are doing what we can, staying with the population that are still here and have nowhere to go. We are trying to channel any aid from outside which might be of any help. As a priority the Bishop of Goma has



Cracks in buildings

asked all the religious communities to make their cars available to transport those who couldn't flee the town for whatever reason, especially the sick, the old, and the handicapped who escaped the lava. We need to take them to a safe place away from town while we organize means to provide for their immediate needs.

But for how long will this continue? And how will the people survive? We are in a very big dilemma, a lot of questions without answers. We need the help of Almighty God and of all people of good will.

War in Ituri.

From where will come our help?

by Fr. Francis Xavier ANGKOSAALA, MAfr. a Ghanaian confrere working in Bunia, Eastern Congo.

I received the following article late in 2020 together with several photos. The article is very graphic and upsetting. I could not publish some of the photos because they show terrible scenes of slaughter. I have edited the article quite a bit but I feel it important to stress that the suffering of the people in Ituri (including our confreres) is far greater in reality than what has been reproduced here. Please pray for them and for those who have the power to stop this evil. Ed.

The new **Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO)** is neither for promoting agriculture nor development, but rather it is a well-armed rebel group. They kill every living human being they come across in their way. This rebel group was created between 1990 and 1991 by a certain Bernard Kakado, who was a healer near Bunia town, the capital town of Ituri. It is a movement amongst the WaLendu Binedi (a tribe) The war is ethnic/political as well as economic but it is the enmity between two tribal groups, Lendu and Hema, which is



Fr. Francis Xavier in a refugee camp

most obvious cause of the war.

Although certain tribes predominate in certain areas, there is quite a mixture in the towns. The town of Nyakunde was attacked by Wa-Lendu/CODECO fighters during the night. Hema and Bira people were amongst victims of this night attack. This stirred up great anger amongst the two tribes whose brothers and sisters were victims and they fought back, but the Lundu fighters succeeded in occupying the town. These ethnic clashes (mainly Hema and Lundu) have continued to spread over all the region of Ituri up to today. But how is it possible that the Lundu can continue to attack so regularly, killing people and burning houses without triggering the intervention of the Congolese military or the well armed MOUNCO (a United Nations force)? People suspect they are getting external support from the Mai-Mai (rebel Congolese militia group), Ugandan rebels from Rwenzori and men from Rwanda.

On 4th September 2020 CODECO arrived in Bunia town to break their brothers out of prison. In the town there was panic in the heart of everybody, including mine. Whilst on the Mahagi-Bunia road, I personally identified a foreign presence among the CODECO. This road from Bunia to the other towns has now become very dangerous, with CODECO setting up lots of barriers where you need to pay, if they let you pass. I have escaped death many times on these roads by prayer alone. The number of people killed in the region of Ituri here is greater than the number of people killed in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide when more than 1 million people were killed. Yet the international communities are not ready to speak out or acknowledge that it is genocide. There is a sort of hypocrisy in this war. Many Congolese are on good terms with foreigners and perpetuate the war here for economic gain. Everyday people are killed, innocent people burnt alive in the villages and in the farms. But the Press refuses to report it. We continue to note attacks and killings orchestrated by CODECO militiamen on the Bunia-Mahagi road. The intensity of the gunfire increases from one minute to the next. In Bunia and its surroundings, heavy gunfire and the rumbling of heavy weapons are often heard. I can testify that CODECO is at least as well armed as the Congolese military. Where they get the

weapons from? God only knows. The Congolese military is afraid of them. The rebel fighters attack the local people who are usually armed only with bows and arrows or cutlasses. People are cut to pieces or run away in disarray. Because of the war in Ituri region, so many displaced



Arrival of CODECO militia in town

persons have come to Bunia, and are lodged in schools and abandoned warehouses. Then there are the street children.

The camps for the displaced are still multiplying. Food shortages and prices are going up because the farmers

who supplied Bunia are now cowering in refugee camps. Refugee camps are everywhere. Conditions are very bad. Lacking food and water for the innocent victims of this stupid war. What future for them and their children? Despite the continuous killing every day, there is no action from the government, the military, or the UN in Ituri. This war has led to witch hunts and settling of old scores, so that the nights are more dangerous than the day. CODECO kills, burns bodies in the houses, or throws them into the cesspits or abandons naked corpses where they lie. Human beings mean nothing to them. I feel like the prophet Jeremiah, I pray for peace everyday and every second but nothing good comes. Sleep has left my eyes. I have to sleep with one eye open to see when they will be coming. I want to be courageous but instead it is fear that comes to me. I was waiting for the moment of deliverance but see only war. When I enter the towns or villages I see the dead. I am only a limited human being and I cannot help much. We continue to pray for peace. Everybody is traumatized by the war. The war in Ituri is permeated by lies. And I can say the people are invaded by lies. The suffering of people here is due to lies and not speaking out the truth. There are traitors, both Congolese and foreigners together. There

are people who, when they come to Ituri, pour oil on the fire to keep it burning hotter than before. They sit in Kinshasa, the capital of Congo, and plan the war. Their tongues are as dangerous as bows and arrows. They have become masters of Ituri, not through truth, but through lies. They are great manipulators. Wealth seekers, they are ready to kill people to get wealth. Yes, they go from crime to crime, yet no one seems to know who they are.

The Church is not spared in this situation. Some priests have been forcibly taken into the forest and tortured. There is no love here. "Love your neighbour as yourself" exists only in the Gospel of Christ. The ethnic situation continues to influence interpersonal relations, especially among the clergy. It is a situation that concerns us as missionaries. There are priests who leave their parishes because they do not belong to this or that ethnic group. As for us, Missionaries of Africa, we are still trying to live the principle of "being in the middle of the village" (avoiding taking sides between ethnic groups) yet, even so, we are accused of being partial towards one tribe or another. We hope that our way of living and acting might evangelise this Church that has welcomed us. But I doubt it, because the gospel we preach seems to have no meaning in the lives of people here. People come to church for refuge or to seek divine protection. Some parishes have been moved elsewhere for safety. Other parishes are empty of priests because they have fled. In our parish some outstations are no longer functioning because of the war. Five of our outstations have been taken over by the militias. All the Christians in those outstations are gone. We do not know where they are currently. Very few are seen in the town of Bunia. Maybe some have been killed or are in the refugee camps. The church buildings have been destroyed. Many Christians are losing their faith because of the long lasting trauma they have been through. Some are looking for miracles in the Protestants churches. What is more disturbing is that many young Catholics are joining the militias because it is surest way to get money and be safe.

Nobody can be trusted. Each person deceives the other. No one tells the truth. All have become accustomed to lying. How can they "return to the Lord with all their hearts". They go from one violent act to another,

from one lie to another lie. Ituri is in a time of continuous weeping and lamenting. But the politicians' tongues are like an arrow that kills. Their mouths tell lies. They don't stop the war because it brings in money for them. Indeed it is sadly true that the many, many natural resources found in Congo is a major cause of the war in Ituri. Ituri province is turning into a desert of sadness, where people cry and complain. When will peace come? Everyone is a stranger in his or her own house. Their eyes overflow with tears. Water floods from our eyes. I believe that they



Refugee camp, home to desperate people

will be heard by God one day and the long awaited peace will come. I cannot explain why Ituri is destroyed by war; why CODECO burns and kills; why the place is like desert where no one passes. All development is stopped or delayed. There is no law or justice. We are waiting for the day when the Government will be ready to put an end to the war. That will be the beginning of freedom and paradise in the beautiful land of Ituri.

My First Tunisian Experience

by Fr. Victor Domshiwe Shehu MAfr.

There is an adage which says: “when children say let’s go back to where we played yesterday, you know they enjoyed the place”. My first attraction toward North Africa was borne of the marvellous experiences I had during my theological studies in Jerusalem and subsequently during my first mission in Ethiopia. Now after spending six years as Vocation Director in Nigeria, I felt attracted toward the Maghreb region (Algeria/Tunisia), so I asked to be appointed there and with the accord of the General Council (in Rome) and the Provincial Superior (in Tunis) this desire became a reality.



Tunisian door. Entry into a new culture

First impressions matter because—as my former rector and mentor, late Fr. Martin Addai (of blessed memory), once told me - it either increases or reduces our prejudices. The welcoming nature of Tunisia was evident in the cordial and smiling Tunisian who was in the same plane with me travelling from Abuja (Nigeria) to Tunis. From our conversation I learned that he works in Kano, one of the largest commercial cities

in northern Nigeria. Then on arrival at Tunis-Carthage International Airport, the immigration officer was friendly and treated me with respect – not something that can be found everywhere in the world. I got the entry stamp with a smile. At the custom’s check-point I was questioned about my nationality. The custom officer gave me a quizzical look when he heard “Nigerian” and asked me

my occupation. When I answered, 'Catholic Priest,' he bowed his head in admiration and ushered me to the door saying 'Bienvenu chez-nous. Soyez chez vous' ('welcome to our country and make yourself at home'). Ahalan wasa-halan, ya Abouna! ('welcome Father'). I



Bab al Bahr, the Gate of the Sea in Tunis

was given an almost regal welcome by my confreres (whom I had never met before) but who picked me up from the airport. I was already feeling so at home in this new land surrounded by amazing companions, clement weather, delicious food, and attractive culture, thinking, and language. I left Nigeria where the environment has so many churches, dominated by black Africans, and a



Tunis Cathedral, opposite Bab al Bahr

familiar milieu of languages and cultures, all of them so well known to me. Here, in Tunisia, however, I am hardly aware of the muezzins calling people to prayer in the mornings and evenings. I am eating unfamiliar food. I don't see the churches filled with worshippers. It is an entirely different, albeit exciting experience. Walking around the city, I realised that the Tunisians seem generally liberal, open-minded, and friendly. I base this on my personal observation that Tunisian



Sidi Bou Said, a beach resort near Tunis

like greeting and conversing with strangers. They are warm hearted. This for me is quite a contrast with Jerusalem. While walking on the streets of Jerusalem, it was common for the kids to call us names simply because we were not of the same race as them. Another thing that impressed me about the Tunisians is their respect for bread. Crumbs or bread that has become stale is not thrown away or discarded in the street; rather they pack it in sachets and hang it high up above the ground. The inescapable question that I ask myself is: what is behind their open-mindedness? Could it be simply to encourage tourism? Is it because of their contact with, or closeness to, Europe? Or is it simply in their nature? Whatever the answer maybe, my first impression is already very positive and this is a sure way to peaceful coexistence and living a dialogue



Sidi Bou Said beach and artist colony

women are not compelled to wear the hijab. Shockingly, I also noticed that it is accepted that some people drink alcohol, as long as it is not taken in public. They

of life. Am I ready for the mission in the Arab world? A resounding YES! I am ready for the mission. However, to be successful at the mission, I have to reset myself and my mentality just as one resets one's phone or computer according to

the country or region where one finds oneself. This piece of advice was given to me by the Archbishop of Tunis, Archbishop Antoniazzi Ilario, during my first visit to his chancery. I bear in mind that I am not here to succeed but to be faithful to the call and mission of Him who has called me. This was the advice that we received from our Provincial, Fr. Francis Bomansaana, on the day of our priestly ordination back in Nigeria in 2010. In order to be well equipped for this mission, I am improving my knowledge of French language after which I will be sent to Egypt to learn Arabic. This course will last for a year. I cannot end these few words without mentioning that I was filled with joy when I visited La Marsa (a suburb of Tunis), where our founder, Cardinal Charles Lavigerie spent his last days on earth. I prayed for all the dead missionaries, for the future of the Society and for my future mission in the Maghreb. I am so looking forward to this missionary experience with optimism.

As Arnold Schwarzenegger said in the movie, the Terminator: "I will be back!" Oh yes I will be back. I am coming back.



Fr. Victor in La Marsa

Before he went to Tunisia, I had asked Fr. Victor to tell me what particularly struck him in the first few days after he arrived there, because once we have been in a place for a while, we tend to forget what strikes us initially. Fr. Victor is looking around with eyes of wonder and, like all of us in a new culture, he has a lot to learn. One thing he will no doubt learn is that "mission" and "missionaries" are loaded terms for most Tunisians. They often see these words as indicating feelings of superiority and are linked with the French colonisation and ideas of conversion. I did not edit out these words since I know that this is not at all what Fr. Victor means. "Peaceful coexistence and living a dialogue of life" is most surely his intention. We wish him well in his new adventure. Ed.

Home News - UK Sector

Diamond Jubilee

Fr. Aylward Shorter MAfr celebrated 60 years of missionary life (counting from the time he took his Missionary Oath) surrounded by his confreres in Little Ealing Lane. After prayers and a buffet supper, he was presented with his cake for his Diamond Jubilee. Fr. Aylward is a well-known anthropologist and over the years has been instrumental in promoting Higher Studies in Africa in Kenya (Gaba Institute and Tangaza College) and London (MIL).



Congratulations, Aylward. May God give you many more years of witness!

Fr. Baptist Mapunda MAfr. 25/06/1959 - 03/06/2021

Fr. Baptist Mapunda MAfr. died in a car accident when returning to his community after saying Mass.

Baptist was known to many in UK where he studied in Totteridge as well as in Zambia, Ghana for his Family Ministry and in his native Tanzania where he was born, ministered and died.

May he rest in peace

Fr. Edward Ndahinda MAfr.



02/12/1964 - 01/06/2021



Fr. Edward Ndahinda MAfr from Uganda, died in Ethiopia where he had been serving as a missionary priest for several years. He is known to many friends of the Missionaries of Africa in UK because of his time spent in St. Edward's for studies and his short time back in UK some time later. Mass was celebrated for him at the cathedral in Adigrat where he was buried. **R.I.P.**

Fr. Jack (Jaak) Thora MAfr. 1927 - 2021

Fr. Jack Thora died in hospital in Glasgow 14th May. He was buried in Rutherglen after a requiem Mass at St. Columkille's church on 26th May celebrated by confreres and by Friends and Family representatives. Jack was born in Belgium as Jaak to a Belgian father and an English mother. At his father's death, the family moved to Rochdale, and Jaak became Jack. After ordination, Jack worked for many years in Uganda taking different responsibilities in difficult times. Later he was Treasurer General in Rome and later still he worked in the Treasurer's office in London. For several years he lived in semi-retirement in Sutton Coldfield, but because of failing sight and health moved to Rutherglen where he peacefully passed his remaining years of life with his community. **R.I.P.**





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Parents & Friends Association
EVENTS

Dear Parents and Friends,

You are not forgotten, and we remember you in our prayers each day. With the continuing uncertainty about Covid restrictions etc, it was thought best not to plan any activities for this year, but we hope with the New Year, we will be able to meet again and follow our regular programme. Please remember us in your prayers,

God bless you all.

Fr. William Crombie

Your charitable prayers are requested

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



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May they rest in peace



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